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An analysis of the leadership and management of dual-culture co-principals in international schools in China

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An analysis of the leadership and management of dual-culture co-principals in international schools in China

Adam Neufield

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Education

University of Bath

Department of Education

January 2019

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Adam Neufeld

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Dedication

For 李燕玲 Christine

for Logan and Breanna

and

for Dorothy Ellen Morris

It's been a long journey. We (my fellow 'first unit' classmates and I) were given eight years to complete the Doctor of Education programme, and I used all eight years...to the day. Slow, yes? I suppose I could have moved along a little more quickly, but with family, work, and life in general, I feel the pace was 'just about right'.

To my wife, 李燕玲 Christine, thank you for your patience, for giving me the 'space' that I needed, for 'nudging' me along, and for your encouragement.

To my son, Logan, and daughter, Breanna, I hope and pray that whatever you decide to set your sights on, you never give up. There were a few times along the way that I felt like stopping, but He helped, and I persevered - maybe it has a little to do with being stubborn, too (as mom might say). Never...give...up.

To my mother, Dorothy Ellen Morris, thank you for raising we three children as a single mother so wonderfully, and for all the sacrifices you made for us.

I can do everything through Him who gives me strength.
Philippians 4:13

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Abstract

As the number of 'non-traditional' international schools in some parts of the world rapidly increases, questions are emerging about the legitimacy of this global subset of schools. At the same time, since these schools operate in locations that arguably call for unique solutions to a variety of local challenges, it seems necessary to consider alternative leadership models for them. One such alternative leadership model is the dual-culture co-principalship, a model currently used in some international schools in China and one that may become more important in the future. The aim of this study, then, was to analyze the leadership and management of dual-culture co-principals in international schools in China. This aim was accomplished through an analysis of their sense-making and decision-making processes using a critical incident method and thematic analysis. Five themes emerged from the thematic analysis, revealing a variety of factors and influences on the sense-making and decision-making processes of dual-culture co-principals. When viewed through one particular institutional theory framework, the emerged themes revealed that dual-culture co-principals face a variety of challenges with respect to securing legitimacy for their international school in China. Several implications resulted from this enquiry, and a number of suggestions for future research have been provided.

Key terms: dual-culture co-principalship, leadership, management, culture, international school, legitimacy, institutional theory, critical incident method, thematic analysis, grounded theory.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 Background

The contexts in which international school leaders in China operate provide some motivation for considering alternative leadership models, and one such alternative school leadership model, the dual-culture co-principalship, can be found in a relatively small number of these schools. The dual-culture co-principalship, a co-principal model comprised of a Chinese and foreign principal, may have some *advantages* in these international school contexts e.g. working with the local government, dealing with local incidents and social media, navigating through the everchanging educational landscape, etc. Thus, it would seem important to know more about this leadership model. Unfortunately, not much can be learned about this leadership model from the literature - at the time of this writing, there has only been one academic article published about it (see Bunnell, 2008).

In the meantime, a disturbance to the international education and international school ‘status quo’ has become obvious after reviewing recent articles focusing on a new type of international school, those serving ‘host country nationals’ (Bunnell, 2016a; Bunnell, Fertig, & James, 2016b; Hayden & Thompson, 2013). The rapidly increasing number of these schools appears to have resulted in calls for the need to establish their legitimacy, as some researchers have made efforts to emphasize differences between this newer type and the more traditional types (see, for example, Bunnell, 2016b; Bunnell, Fertig, & James, 2016c). A review of these articles, though, leaves one with impression that these calls for legitimacy come from researchers and practitioners with a Euro-centric and normative outlook. Nevertheless, a suggested route for establishing the legitimacy of international schools, Scott’s (2014) institutional theory framework, has been proposed recently by several authors (Bunnell, 2016b; Bunnell et al, 2016c).

Leaders of international schools may face challenges with regards to securing legitimacy for their schools not only due to the nature of international schools (Bunnell, 2016a) and the contexts in which they are emerging e.g. China, India and the United Arab Emirates (Walker, 2016), but also because of the ‘complex, evolving, loosely-linked system’ (CELLS) environment of schools (Fertig & James, 2016). Yet, the vast majority of these international school leaders are *solo* school leaders e.g. principals, heads of school. What of dual-culture co-principalships? A consideration of the proposed criteria for institutional legitimacy within Scott’s (2014) framework, the legitimizing requirement that principals lead and manage their school towards the achievement of its institutional *primary task* (Bunnell et al, 2016b), and the

complex nature of schools reveal the possibility that dual-culture co-principals may face additional ‘legitimacy-securing’ challenges due to the dual-culture and shared nature of this leadership model.

1.2 Rationale for this enquiry

One of several reasons for taking on this thesis project relates to my educational experiences in China. I have worked in international schools in Asia for 18 years, 14 of which have been in China, working in a variety of roles under dual-culture co-principals. I have thus had the opportunity to observe dual-culture co-principals in action, having worked under a variety of combinations of Chinese and foreign co-principals over the years, some more successful than others (in my opinion). As I aspire to someday take on a dual-culture co-principal role, I would like to have as much information as possible about the role in order to be better prepared for it.

Yet, not much is known about this leadership model, and so the second reason relates to the first. The dual-culture co-principalship is a leadership model that is not well known globally by international school researchers, practitioners, as well as teachers and parents; in China, it is currently being used only by a small number of international schools. If one considers the rapid increase in number of international schools in China, particularly the ‘non-traditional’ type in China’s ‘Tier 2’ and ‘Tier 3’ cities (Coughlan, 2017), and the need at times to manage challenges unique to these contexts (e.g. working with the local government, dealing with local incidents and social media, navigating through the everchanging educational landscape), it is not unreasonable to suggest that a dual-culture co-principalship may have some *advantages* leading and managing an international school in these contexts. Thus, it would seem important to know more about this leadership model.

The third reason relates to institutional legitimacy. Why should anyone care whether or not an international school is ‘legitimate’? It would appear from the following data from ISC Research (ISC, 2017b) that families in China, whether expat or local, do not appear to be very concerned with questions of legitimacy. As of 2017:

- China had the greatest number of international schools globally (by country), with 638; the number of international schools in Asia outnumbered those in all other continents (Europe, Oceania, Africa, and the Americas) combined;
- In China, there was a 13% growth in “schools for children of foreign workers” (the traditional type of international school) over the five-year period of 2012-2017; the reported 112 schools in 2017 was a slight decrease from the number reported in 2016;

- In China, there was a 128% growth in “international private Chinese schools” (a newer type of international school) over the same period, with 344 schools as of 2017;
- Regarding curriculum adoption rates by international schools, while UK, bilingual, US, and IBDP curricula are all on an increase, bilingual curricula are currently on a *higher* rate of increase.

Due to i) the incredible number and growth rate of international schools in China, particularly of the newer type of international school (offering a bilingual programme to host country nationals) and ii) the lack of overall accountability of many of these schools, there would certainly seem to be justification in attempts to increase the level of scrutiny on them. Establishing their legitimacy would therefore seem to be one such way of doing so. Informing research into the legitimacy of international schools that use the dual-culture co-principal leadership model is therefore another reason for taking on this project.

A fourth reason relates to the paucity of research into areas of education that this study will delve. A number of authors have described a lack of research, in particular empirical research, into international schools (Hayden & Thompson, 2016), leadership in international schools (Blandford & Shaw, 2001), leadership in international schools in the Asia Pacific region (Lee, Hallinger, & Walker, 2012, p. 289), and cultural perspectives on leadership and administration (Belchetz & Leithwood, 2007; Hallinger, Walker, & Bajunid, 2005; Walker & Dimmock, 2002). I am motivated, therefore, to contribute to the literature in these areas.

The fifth and final reason? It is my hope that this research will serve to inform others: existing dual-culture co-principals; those who wish to take on a dual-culture co-principal role; international schools who are currently using this leadership model; and schools that are considering the adoption of it.

1.3 Research aim

The aim of this study will be to analyze the leadership and management of dual-culture co-principals in international schools in China, and I will attempt to accomplish this aim through an analysis of their sense-making and decision-making processes using a critical incident method and thematic analysis.

The results of this enquiry will hopefully also help to gain an understanding of the ability of dual-culture co-principals to secure legitimacy for their international school in China by learning how they come together to lead and manage their school towards the achievement of its institutional primary task. Understanding the extent to which dual-culture co-principals

have, as Bunnell et al (2016c) state, “shared conceptions of the nature of reality and common sense-making” (p 11) may help to inform legitimization processes for international schools that adopt this alternative leadership model.

1.4 Research questions

In order to achieve the aim for this enquiry and to better understand the ability of dual-culture co-principals to secure legitimacy for their international school through their leadership and management, the following research questions will be used to guide this study:

1. *How do dual-culture co-principals from different cultures and with experiences from different contexts interpret organizational matters?*
2. *What factors influence how dual-culture co-principals from different cultures and with experiences from different contexts interpret organizational matters?*
3. *How do the dual-culture co-principals come to agree on (make decisions on) organizational matters?*

In addition to answering these research questions, I will also attempt to determine what dual-culture co-principals believe is their school’s institutional primary task. As will be stated in the review of literature chapter (Section 2.10), for a school to be considered a *legitimate* institution it must have an institutional primary task, “the task that it [the institution] must perform to survive” (Rice, 1963, p. 13).

1.5 Organization of the enquiry

In Chapter 2, I begin with a review of relevant literature in an attempt to review and critique the concepts involved in this thesis. In Chapter 3, I present the research philosophy, methodology and research design for this enquiry. The process of collecting the empirical data, the analysis of the data and the results are provided in Chapter 4, and a discussion of the findings is presented in Chapter 5. In the final chapter, Chapter 6, the conclusions, limitations and implications of this research enquiry as well as suggestions for future research are presented.

Chapter 2 - Review of the literature

2.1 Introduction

When one starts to consider the aim and contexts of this enquiry - dual-culture co-principalships...international schools...China...many concepts immediately come to mind. It will be my intention, therefore, to lead the reader initially through a conceptual ‘journey’, slowly building from the general to the specific. Throughout the first part of this chapter, then, literature related to principalships, leadership, management, co-principalships, distributed leadership, dual-culture co-principalships, culture, leadership and culture, international schools and leadership in international schools will be critically reviewed.

I wish to emphasize that a review of the literature revealed that very little *academic* literature on co-principalships exists, and only one journal article on dual-culture co-principalships could be located (see Bunnell, 2008). In an attempt to build up a conceptual framework without an adequate pool of related literature available, I continued to review concepts during the literature review phase of this enquiry by anticipating issues and concepts that might have had a bearing on the co-principals’ sense-making and decision-making processes, and these concepts will also be examined in this literature review. For example, literature related to tenure, role stress and role ambiguity, and induction and training emerged as concepts for review when I began to consider the challenges presented to principals entering leadership positions in international schools, the contexts for this enquiry.

My awareness of the changing international school landscape in China (see Section 1.2) along with my own growing questions around the need for leaders of international schools to secure legitimacy for their schools provided the motivation to learn more about legitimacy and institutional theory, and so these concepts, too, will be reviewed in this chapter. The need to learn about the impact of the increased complexity of international schools on their legitimacy generated the need to review literature that dealt with one particular perspective of schools: schools as ‘complex, evolving loosely linked systems’, or CELLS.

After the interview process began and thematic categories started to emerge, several other concepts became important to review such that the reader would have some background to the concepts used in the Discussion chapter (Chapter 5). For example: the ‘learning curve’ experienced by co-principals new to the dual-culture co-principalship and international school context revealed that a review of Adult Ego Development (AED) literature would be important for an understanding of possible individual influences on sense-making processes; comments from co-principals related to how the two co-principals come together to make sense of matters

and make decisions revealed that literature on personality and intercultural competency might be important for understanding the influences on their relationship; and the impact of groups in the school community on the co-principals' sense-making and decision-making processes suggested that literature on 'small cultures' should be examined.

The final part of the literature review will serve to establish a connection between the concepts of dual-culture co-principalships, international schools and legitimacy for purposes of completing the conceptual background for this enquiry. The review of literature now proceeds with a look at the first concept, the principalship.

2.2 The principalship

Pont et al (2008) place the historical roots of principalships with "the industrial model of schooling where one individual bears the prime responsibility for the entire organization" (p 2), and although some claim that the solo school principal is the key educational leader of a school and the staff member with the most opportunity to exercise leadership (Gurr, Drysdale, & Mulford, 2005), a variety of alternative school leadership constellations have been reported (Court, 2003a; Glatter & Harvey, 2006; Poole, 2010).

The role of the principal has been associated with the concepts of 'administration', 'management' and 'leadership' (Bush, 2008b; Dimmock, 1999; Gunter, 2004). These terms have been used synonymously depending on contexts (Sapre, 2000) and they share some characteristics (Pont et al, 2008). However, since 'administration' now appears to convey 'lower order duties' (Dimmock, 1999), I will briefly review the two remaining reported broad functions of principals: 'leadership' and 'management'.

2.3 Leadership and management

'Leadership' and 'management' are important but different principalship concepts (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Bolam, 1999; Bush & Glover, 2003; Connolly, James, & Fertig, 2017), and principals perform both functions simultaneously (Bush, 2008a). Both functions have been claimed as necessary for successful schools (Hallinger, 2003a) and principals perform both without being aware of which one they are doing (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999). While there has been much disagreement about the degree of overlap between the concepts (Yukl, 2002), some authors see them as mutually exclusive (Bennis & Nanus, 1985) and Gronn (2003) has queried whether anything can be gained by differentiating them. However, there appears to be general agreement in the literature that 'leadership' is a process of influencing others' actions to achieve desirable ends, while 'management' refers to the daily and routine maintenance of school operations (Bush & Glover, 2003; Cuban, 1988; Pont et al, 2008; Yukl,

2002). The pervasive use of ‘leadership’ in the educational literature, particularly due to its coupling with other relevant concepts involved in this study, warrants a more critical look at this concept.

2.4 Leadership

Leadership “as a concept and a set of practices has been the subject of an enormous quantity of popular and academic literature. Most of this literature is about particular approaches to, or models of, leadership” (Leithwood et al, 1999, p. 5). It is a “murky” (Leithwood, 2003, p. 114) and complex (Bennis, 1959; Yukl, 2002) term and there is no single ‘correct’ definition for it (Leithwood et al, 1999). Most authors have not attempted to define it (Rost, 1993), but when defined, the definitions are based on researchers’ individual perspectives and purposes (Campbell, 1977; Yukl, 2002). Some researchers have questioned the term’s usefulness in research (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003), and several authors have noted that leadership and other educational terms are subjective, human constructs which are treated as reality (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003; Leithwood et al, 1999). Luthans (1979) states that theorists too often forget that leadership and other terms “are merely labels that are attached to hypothetical constructs. Too often, the hypothetical construct is treated as the empirical reality” (p 202).

Clark and Clark (1990) suggest that we need some agreement on the concept if we are to move forward in our understanding of it. From a *western* perspective, many definitions of leadership appear to involve the concept of *influence* (Bush & Glover, 2003; Gronn, 2002a), but apart from the concept of ‘influence’, definitions of leadership “appear to have little else in common” (Yukl, 2002, p. 18).

If we choose to rest on the idea that leadership has a lot to do with ‘influence’, Yukl (2002) points out that we should be mindful of who exerts this ‘influence’, the intended purpose of the influence, in what manner is the influence exerted, and the outcome of the influence. How influence is exerted (and on what or whom) can be framed through several models of leadership proposed in the literature. Bush and Glover (2003), for example, provide an overview of these models: instructional, transformational, moral, participative, managerial, postmodern, interpersonal, and contingent.

Leadership has also been linked with two concepts in addition to influence: values, and vision (Bush, 2008b). While it is not clear on what basis Bush makes this claim, he states that explanations are required in each leadership context in order to understand what and whose values underlie the application of influence; his review (ibid) of works by several authors (see

Bolam, 1993; Fullan, 1992) summarized a variety of challenges related to attempts made by school leaders in providing a ‘vision’ for their school.

Leithwood, Harris et al (2008), making several ‘strong’ claims about leadership based on research exclusively from Anglo-American contexts, claim that the personal traits, dispositions and personality characteristics of principals are linked to leadership effectiveness - the generalizability of their claims across different contexts, particularly non-Anglo-American contexts, is questionable. It would seem from the review of leadership literature that researchers have made some assumptions with the concept, particularly with respect to its meaning and usage in different societal cultures - this issue will be discussed further in Section 2.7.

Pertinent to this study, some authors have questioned whether leadership should be viewed as a specialized role or as a shared process (Gronn, 2002b; Yukl, 2002). Whether it is linked with influence, values, vision, or other concepts, the concept and function of leadership (and management) might arguably become more complex if it is shared with one or more persons. The sharing of the leadership and management of a school becomes an interesting point of discussion when one considers an alternative leadership model, the ‘co-principalship’, a “shared leadership model” (Eckman, 2006, p. 89) where two principals jointly lead and manage a school. Sharing these important functions may present co-principals with challenges – for example, when attempting to develop or implement a shared, identical vision for their school. The ‘co-principalship’ and the relatively sparse academic and empirical literature describing this leadership model are reviewed in the next section.

2.5 Co-principalships

2.5.1 Definition of ‘co-principalship’

A ‘co-principalship’, also referred to as ‘leadership couple’ (Gronn, 1999) or ‘co-headship’/‘job-share headship’ in the UK, is a leadership model where “two people share their school’s leadership” (Court, 2003a, p. 8). Anderson & Lacey (2007) suggest that the ‘co’ in co-principalship “reflects a numerical distribution of leadership responsibility between two or more leaders at the same organizational level” (p 2). These definitions do not answer questions about how leadership (influence, values, vision) is shared between the two principals, nor what factors might have an impact on the effective sharing of leadership (e.g. culture, gender, experience, context) between the two principals. In the following sub-sections, I will provide a brief review of the literature on co-principalships in an effort to build some understanding of

both the extent to which this leadership model has been implemented around the globe as well as its nature.

2.5.2 Co-principalships around the globe

Co-principalships have been used as an alternative leadership model in schools since the late 1970s (Court, 2003a; West, 1978). Although popular and practitioner articles on co-principalships abound (Brown & Feltham, 1997; Chirichello, 2003; Cromwell, 2002; Flemming, 2003; Harrell, 1999; 2003a, 2003b; Korba, 1982; Shockley & Smith, 1981; West, 1978), only a few academic articles or empirical studies on co-principalships exist (see Eckman, 2006, 2007; Eckman & Kelber, 2010; Grubb & Flessa, 2006); most of the studies on this leadership model have been of a small-scale case or field study type (Court, 2003b, 2004; Gronn & Hamilton, 2004).

A review of the co-principalship literature reveals that a variety in the forms and natures of this leadership model exist and operate across a diverse range of contexts (Anderson & Lacey, 2007; Glatter & Harvey, 2006) e.g. different countries; primary and secondary schools; small, medium and large-sized schools; secular and Catholic schools. Although several global reviews of co-principalships have helped to provide an international perspective of the model (Anderson & Lacey, 2007; Court, 2003a; Glatter & Harvey, 2006), the limited academic co-principalship literature (Masters, 2013) and the varied contexts within which they operate do not permit generalizations about the nature of the model.

While most co-principalships have been implemented in domestic education systems in the US, UK, Australia, and New Zealand, the use of this model has also been reported in Canada (Fredua-Kwarteng, 2013; Fulford & Daigle, 2007), Chile (Flessa, 2014), China (Bunnell, 2008), Hong Kong SAR (Glatter & Harvey, 2006), the Netherlands (Court, 2003a) and Sweden (Wilhelmson & Döös, 2014).

It appears that most if not all co-principalships have been implemented without any groundwork or research informing their implementation (Chirichello, 2003; Eckman, 2006, 2007), yet they have been implemented for a variety of reasons (see, for example, Allan, 2008; Anderson & Lacey, 2007; Chirichello, 2003; 2003a, 2003b; Eckman, 2007; Eckman & Kelber, 2010; Flessa, 2014; Gronn & Hamilton, 2004; Hewitt, Denny, & Pijanowski, 2012; Marks, 2013; Naso, 2005; Paterson, 2006; Paynter, 2003; Pierce, 2000; Pierce & Fenwick, 2002; Shockley & Smith, 1981; Upsall, 2004; West, 1978).

For reasons that relate to a form of the co-principalship that is the focus of this enquiry, I would like to report that some co-principalships have been implemented around the globe to align with

a school's ethos (or philosophy) e.g. to promote a school's family-like ethos (Thomson & Blackmore, 2006) or to build peace (Bunnell, 2008 citing; Winkler, 2003). In Section 2.6, I review a distinctive co-principalship model implemented to align with an 'east meets west' ethos currently used in some international schools in China (Bunnell, 2008), a *dual-culture* co-principalship - the leadership model on which this research enquiry is focused.

A brief review of co-principalship types, the benefits, challenges and effectiveness of this leadership model, and the literature discussing its shared nature now follows.

2.5.3 Co-principalship types

Attempts have been made to categorize the variety of co-principalship forms despite the diverse range of contexts in which they operate. Court (2003a, 2003b) for example, defined several types: 'task-specialized' (or 'split-task' dual leadership) co-principalships, where one full-time principal performs administrative (operational) functions and another full-time principal assumes instructional leadership functions (see also Korba, 1982; Shockley & Smith, 1981; West, 1978); 'supported dual leadership' co-principalships, where two full-time principals share some responsibilities and divide others between them according to their different strengths, interests and leadership styles; 'integrative' co-principalships, where two full-time co-principals with no pre-determined roles collaborate within a wider school leadership team (see, for example, Dass, 1995); part-time, 'job-sharing' co-principalships, where two principals work full-time on alternate days (to manage families or other commitments). While such categories serve to simplify the diversity in co-principalship forms, these categories hide variations in the contexts in which co-principalships have operated e.g. small and large schools, primary and secondary schools, secular and religious schools, the gender of the two principals (Eckman, 2006), and whether or not the two principals began their roles simultaneously (Gronn & Hamilton, 2004).

2.5.4 Benefits and challenges associated with co-principalships

A range of benefits and challenges resulting from implementing co-principalships has been noted in the literature (Court, 2004; Eckman, 2006, 2007; Gronn & Hamilton, 2004; Masters, 2013; Thomson & Blackmore, 2006; West, 1978). Reported benefits of co-principalships have included: the ability to share in decision making, being able to bounce ideas off one another and gaining insights into alternative perspectives on issues (Eckman, 2006, 2007); the promotion of a culture of collaboration and shared leadership (Thomson & Blackmore, 2006); the distribution of leadership and helping to reduce error and risk when making decisions

(Gronn & Hamilton, 2004); the increase of job satisfaction, recruitment advantages, democratic leadership, and sharing of responsibility (Wilhelmson & Döös, 2014).

Reported challenges have included: the need for co-principals to have some degree of personal compatibility and a shared philosophy of education (Masters, 2013); the need for co-principals to have excellent personal skills, communication skills and humility (Eckman, 2006, 2007); problems in communicating, defining responsibilities, inefficiency (due to the need for time to reach a consensus on issues) and difficulties with developing trust and sharing power (Eckman, *ibid*). With regards to trust, power and authority, several authors have noted the importance of understanding their impact on leadership in education.

For example, although Precey's (2012) paper on leadership and trust may not be entirely relevant to co-principalships (the author focuses on transformational leadership and staff in schools), he emphasizes the importance of trust in leadership and management in schools and reviews a range of research that emphasizes the importance of trust in schools and in leadership and management. Fink (2005) states that the "starting point for any relationship is trust. In fact, the very foundation of human society is trust" (p 45).

The concepts of power and authority and their relation to distributed leadership are discussed in Section 2.5.5. Krausz' (1986) definition of power fits well with definitions of leadership provided earlier (see Section 2.3) – he defines power as "the ability to influence the actions of others, individuals, or groups" and adds that "it [power] is understood as the leader's influence potential" (p 69). Woods (2016) notes that *one* perspective of authority is to see it as a legitimization of power, or "top-down control" (p 155), and he argues that power and therefore authority can emerge through social interactions and struggles, and can also be shared.

The array of benefits and challenges reported in the literature are varied and contextual (Anderson & Lacey, 2007; Court, 2004) - assumptions made regarding the extension of these benefits and/or challenges to co-principalships implemented in other contexts would therefore appear questionable. While some reported benefits and challenges have been discerned through empirical studies (Eckman, 2006, 2007; Eckman & Kelber, 2010) or anecdotally through small (and highly contextual) case and field studies (Bunnell, 2008; Court, 2003b, 2004; Gronn & Hamilton, 2004; Grubb & Flessa, 2006; Masters, 2013; Thomson & Blackmore, 2006), many have been claimed without any supporting evidence (e.g. Chirichello, 2003; Kegan, 1994; Korba, 1982; Shockley & Smith, 1981; West, 1978). Other limitations to reported claims of benefits and challenges relate to how the empirical studies were carried out: the use of self-selecting survey respondents (Eckman & Kelber, 2010), and feedback obtained from principals only (Eckman, 2006, 2007).

2.5.5 A shared/distributed leadership model?

A number of studies have analyzed co-principalships through a ‘shared leadership’ (Cannon, 2004; Court, 2007a; Thomson & Blackmore, 2006) or ‘distributed leadership’ (Bunnell, 2008; Gronn & Hamilton, 2004) lens. While the concept of distributed leadership might be considered a shared influence *process*, the concept is fuzzy as it can mean a variety of things to different people (Spillane, 2005; Tian, Risku, & Collin, 2016). Unfortunately, these studies were not helpful in providing insights into the sense-making or decision-making processes of the co-principals due to the studies’ particular aims and focuses.

As previously mentioned, it is difficult to separate leadership from management when considering the daily routines and overall functions of a principal (see Section 2.3). Thus, to discuss ‘shared leadership’ or ‘distributed leadership’ without any consideration of the concept or function of management would seem inappropriate - the concept of distributed leadership, state Thomson and Blackmore (2006), “discursively supports an unhelpful separation of leadership and management” (p 164), a claim also made by others (Court, 2003a; Gronn, 2002b, 2003).

As mentioned in Section 2.5.4, Eckman (2006, 2007) reported challenges in some co-principalships with respect to sharing power. This finding may be of relevance, as Woods (2016) has called for a greater awareness of the complexities of social authority in understanding the possible connections between power and distributed leadership. Granted, one could imagine that co-principals would have equal and legitimate authority in the school’s leadership and management hierarchy. Yet, this may not be the case in reality, and co-principals work within a social network. Woods’ (ibid) research offered only a cursory look at two school cases involving leadership and teachers and thus his findings may not be applicable to co-principalships. However, one of his statements in particular helps to raise awareness of distributed leadership and authority: “...to understand how distributed leadership is played out in different settings, it is necessary to come to grips with the configuration of complementary and competing authorities that characterize those settings” (p 159). Finally, referring to distributed leadership configurations, Woods (ibid) asks, “What authorities predominate?” and “How and where is authority constructed and generated, and by whom?” (p 159).

2.5.6 Co-principals - decision-making and relationships

Conducted within small-scale contexts, several studies have examined decision-making processes and co-principalships. Masters (2013), for example, as a result of her critical narrative study of principals and co-principalships at an Australian Catholic school, claimed

that successful co-principalships required personal compatibility, complementary leadership styles, a “compatibility of ethos”, and “similarity in terms of philosophy” (p 1217). Masters did not attempt to uncover the underlying sources (e.g. norms, values) for the principals’ ethos, philosophy or personal characteristics. Wilhelmson and Döös (2014), through their qualitative study of co-principalships in three nine-year compulsory schools in Sweden, claimed that having mutual trust and sharing similar values were important for positive relationships. Their claims, though, appear to result directly from principals’ claims without attempting to discover underlying causes. It is also evident from these studies that these co-principalship researchers did not attempt to understand the interpretive and sense-making processes that eventually led co-principals to the point of making decisions.

The relationship between leadership, distributed leadership, authority, power and decision-making in schools has been examined by Cunningham (2014). Her case study involved schools in Western Australia and looked at leadership practices using a hybrid decision-making continuum; earlier decision-making continuums have been put forth by Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1973), the Hay Group (2004), and Hargreaves and Fink (2006). Cunningham (ibid) states that “in a complex structural organization, such as a school, power is wielded every time a final decision is made” (p 11) and goes further by suggesting that “great power is concentrated in the position of the principalship, because this one leader may not only make final decisions but also choose what decisions need to be made” (p 12). Cunningham’s research and her decision-making continuum may be relevant to this thesis project as they raise questions about how the dual-culture co-principals lead and manage by coming together to make decisions on matters. For example, how is power shared? Do the co-principals experience equal power and does any imbalance of power impact on their decision-making processes?

In the following section, I introduce and review the very limited academic literature on a distinctive form of the co-principalship, the ‘dual-culture co-principalship’, the focus of this enquiry.

2.6 Dual-culture co-principalships

A common characteristic of most co-principalships reported in the literature is that they consist of principals hired within similar contexts e.g. a school district, a state, a nation. It is at this point that I narrow my literature review of co-principalships to a consideration of one form of this leadership model and the research focus for this study, a ‘dual-culture’ co-principalship, a co-principalship comprised of two principals from two different *societal* or *national* cultures. Culture will be discussed in Section 2.7.

A search of the published academic literature revealed a sparse number of studies of dual-culture co-principalships around the world: one in an international school in China (Bunnell, 2008); one in Canada (Fredua-Kwarteng, 2013; Fulford & Daigle, 2007); and one in Israel (reported by Bunnell, 2008). A Google search at the time of this writing using the terms “co-principalship”, “international school” and “China” revealed that dual-culture co-principalships are currently being used in several international school networks in China: Yew Chung International School (the school of Bunnell’s (ibid) study), Shanghai United International School, and Yew Wah International Education School.

Bunnell’s (2008) ‘knowledge for understanding’ study deserves a closer look as the focus of my research relates to dual-culture co-principalships in China. It is not clear if the purpose of Bunnell’s research was to analyze the ‘distributed leadership’ aspect of this leadership model or to provide a descriptive overview of this leadership model as it is practiced in one international school. To claim that the co-principalship is a form of distributed leadership would require, as several distributed leadership authors have stated, a study of leadership practices and observations of a wider net of stakeholders (Duif, Harrison, van Dartel, & Sinyolo, 2013; Spillane, 2005). Thus, I suggest that Bunnell’s purpose was the latter since an analysis of the co-principalship involved neither the individuals and groups (or hybrids - see Gronn, 2009) involved in leadership activities in the school nor their practices and interactions (Spillane, 2005).

Many questions were left unanswered in Bunnell’s (ibid) research about the leadership and management aspects of this leadership model. With respect to the co-principals’ interpretations of school matters and decision-making processes, Bunnell’s study was limited in: i) scope - only one co-principal pair was interviewed, and even then, one of the principals was absent at the time of his visit; and ii) depth - Bunnell stated that he “did not get to study or observe the co-principalship model in operation”, adding, “a study of the day-to-day dynamics of such a model is arguably of limited use, as its exact nature probably differs across the five schools in China, and has limited application to other schools” (ibid, p 197).

In addition to the practical benefits of the co-principalships mentioned previously, Bunnell (ibid) claimed that the dual-culture co-principalship offered several others: a risk reducing arrangement; improving decision-making continuity; and improving the co-principals’ sense of satisfaction. While these benefits were similar to those reported in other co-principalship literature, it is not clear what evidence the author used to support these claims. Stating that the co-principalship ‘elevates’ the status of the Chinese co-principal and mitigates “the negative aspects of a discriminatory...contractual system in many international schools” (p 202), Bunnell touts the “politically expedient” (p 201) aspect of the model. More pertinent perhaps

to my study, Bunnell notes the existence of potential challenges to the “dual leadership system” (p 204) due to cultural differences between the principals, and refers to other leadership studies that have examined the impact of societal and national cultures on leadership (Dimmock & Walker, 2000a; Hallinger & Kantamara, 2000a; Shah, 2006).

The relationship between culture and leadership has largely been ignored in the literature. In the following sections, I review literature on ‘culture’, ‘societal culture’, and ‘organizational culture’ as well as literature that links these concepts to leadership.

2.7 Leadership and culture

2.7.1 Culture, societal culture and organizational culture

In Section 1.1, I raised the possibility of dual-culture co-principals facing ‘legitimacy-securing’ challenges due to their different cultural and experiential backgrounds. An examination of the decision-making processes of dual-culture co-principals warrants at least a brief discussion and critique of the concept of ‘culture’.

A distinction between two levels of ‘culture’, the macrolevel (i.e. national or societal culture) and microlevel (i.e. organizational or school culture), has been made by several authors (Dimmock & Walker, 2005; Rugman & Collinson, 2009; Yin, 2013). Before discussing leadership with respect to societal and organizational culture, I provide here a brief and limited look at the concept and definition of culture through a review of what I consider relevant educational and leadership literature.

Unfortunately, while there is no shortage of definitions for ‘culture’, a great many authors of educational literature that connect and discuss leadership with this concept do not explicitly define it. Moreover, it is not clear whether discussions of ‘culture’ occur from a realist or idealist perspective, and Sarangi (1995) states that any definition of culture is necessarily reductionist.

Hofstede (1980) defined culture as “the collective programming of the human mind that distinguishes the members of one human group from those of another. Culture, in this sense, is a system of collectively held values” (p 24); Dimmock and Walker’s (2000a) definition is similar. Rugman and Collinson (2009) claim there is a strong consensus that “key elements of culture include language, religion, values, attitudes, customs, and norms of a group or society” (p 132).

The definitions of culture proposed by Hofstede, seemingly made from a realist perspective, would appear to be referring to ‘societal culture’. If we consider the purpose of defining culture as one that emphasizes the impact of societal culture on the interactions, behaviour and decision-making processes of school principals rather than as one that serves to distinguish one culture from another (see, for example, Hofstede, 1980), we may look to other definitions. Lustig and Koester (1999), for example, from an intercultural competence perspective, define culture as the shared interpretations about beliefs, values and norms which affect the behaviours of people.

In the next two sections I will briefly review the concept of leadership with respect to both organizational and societal culture. Before moving on to these sections and a review of these concept pairings in the literature, I would like to raise for brief consideration Holliday’s (1999) concepts of ‘large’ versus ‘small’ cultures. Holliday defines ‘large’ cultures as reified ethnic, national or international ‘cultures’ resulting from essentialist attempts at grouping based on perceived features, and ‘small’ cultures as those that “signify any cohesive social grouping” (p 237). A ‘small’ culture (non-essentialist) approach “attempts to liberate ‘culture’ from notions of ethnicity and nation and from the perceptual dangers they carry with them” and “is more concerned with social processes as they emerge” (p 237). I assumed at the outset of this enquiry a ‘large culture’ approach when defining and studying the dual-culture co-principalships in international school contexts and was prepared for the possible existence of ‘small’ cultures on the school campuses I would be visiting.

2.7.2 Leadership and organizational culture

There is much literature, from organizational as well as educational sources, that speaks to the potential impact of leadership on the school environment and vice-versa (Jalal, 2017; Leithwood et al, 2008; Nikčević, 2016; Tsai, 2011). Although the unit of analysis for this enquiry is the dual-culture co-principal pair at each international school visited, the potential impact of the school environment on the co-principals’ decision-making processes should not be ignored. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (2011), for example, from a leadership and organizational perspective, define culture as “the way in which a group of people solves problems and reconciles dilemmas” (p 6). It is possible that dual-culture co-principals make sense of things, and make decisions, in the context of a wider group of people i.e. their decisions may be made under the influence of many other school stakeholders. Thus, it may be difficult to ignore the role of the school’s culture, its ‘organizational culture’, on the co-principals decision-making processes. What, though, is ‘organizational culture’?

James and Connolly (2009) state that there has been a lack of agreement on the concept of organizational culture. Atmosphere, ethos and climate have been used synonymously with school culture in the literature, and the concept has usually been discussed from a realist (as opposed to a relativist) perspective (James & Connolly, 2009) i.e. organizational culture is something external to an individual and can be manipulated in order to achieve ends. This view of school culture continues to permeate the educational literature - transformational leaders, for example, have been claimed to influence organizational culture (James & Connolly, 2009; Leithwood et al, 1999). Principals, according to one study by James and Connolly (2009), were considered as “cultural icons” (p 401), representing and embodying the cultural values of the staff of the school. If this is true, it would be interesting to learn how dual-culture co-principals would ‘embody’ the cultural values of their school and staff.

In the next section, I discuss leadership with respect to its relationship to societal culture.

2.7.3 Leadership and societal culture

Assuming that the two principals in a dual-culture co-principalship enter a working relationship with different (societal) cultural backgrounds, and considering that they may have two different first languages, their task of leading and managing a school may arguably present them with challenges not experienced by traditional, solo school leadership models.

Referring to the research of several other authors (Gerstner & Day, 1994; Hofstede, 1984), Hallinger and Leithwood (1998) state that “the broader societal culture exerts an influence on administrators beyond the influence exerted by a specific organization’s culture” (pp 128, 129). Gerstner and Day (1994) note that “because leadership is a cultural phenomenon, inextricably linked to the values and customs of a group of people, we do not expect differences in leadership prototypes to be completely random. Rather, they should be linked to dimensions of national culture” (p 123). A review of the school leadership literature, however, reveals that the knowledge base used for informing policy, practice and leadership development globally has been created largely by theory and empirical research from *western* cultural contexts (Dimmock & Walker, 2000a; Hallinger, 2010, 2011; Hallinger & Bryant, 2013; Walker & Dimmock, 2002). Schools in North America, UK, Northern Europe, Australia and New Zealand have been the main sources of this research (Hallinger & Huber, 2012; Hallinger et al, 2005).

Hallinger (1995) claims that the importance of cultural context for theory and practice in administration should not be underestimated, and over the past several decades, a growing number of authors have called for a cultural perspective on leadership and administration (Belchetz & Leithwood, 2007; Cheng, 1995; Hallinger & Leithwood, 1996; Hallinger et al,

2005; Hofstede, 1984; Walker & Dimmock, 2002), with authors arguing for the possible impact that national/societal context may have on the practice of school leadership (Belchetz & Leithwood, 2007; Cheng, 1995; Gandolfi, 2012; Hallinger, 2011; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Hallinger & Huber, 2012; House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004).

Researchers studying leadership practices outside of Anglo-American contexts claim that the meaning and nature of leadership is dependent on societal culture (Dimmock & Walker, 2000b; Offermann & Hellmann, 1997; Shah, 2010), and while concepts such as change, relationships and power, integral to many definitions and types of leadership, are studied and described in Anglo-American leadership literature without any reference to societal culture, several authors have noted socio-cultural differences in them (Dimmock & Walker, 2000a; Hallinger & Kantamara, 2000a, 2000b; Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). Hallinger (2011) states, for example, that “leadership, management and organizational change are socially constructed processes embedded in the normative cultures of particular societies” (p 305). Yet, determining what influence societal culture has on educational leadership is “complex and confusing” (Dimmock & Walker, 2000b) - “we ‘know’ societal culture has an influence, but it is extremely difficult to articulate clearly what this influence is...” (p 110).

Finally, Hallinger (1995), referencing the work of Ralston et al (1992), describes the extent of cross-cultural research of national culture in business contexts: “Although the research here is less developed, there is also support for the proposition that different cultural values and norms distinguish, at a gross level, Eastern versus Western cultures” (p 5). The relationship between leadership and intercultural competency is briefly reviewed in the next section.

2.7.4 Leadership and intercultural competency

Leadership has also been linked with societal culture through the concept of ‘intercultural competency’ (Gudykunst, 2003), which has also been described using a variety of other terms: cross-cultural effectiveness, cross-cultural adjustment, cross-cultural competence, cross-cultural communication effectiveness, intercultural effectiveness, and intercultural communication competence (Taylor, 1994). Intercultural competency is, according to Taylor (ibid), “a transformative process whereby the stranger develops an adaptive capacity, altering his or her perspective to effectively understand and accommodate the demands of the host culture” (p 156). While it should be noted that ‘intercultural’ may encompass inter-ethnic, inter-religious, and inter-regional contexts as well as interactions between genders (Ting-Toomey, 2012), some researchers limit this term to refer to those between individuals from different societal cultures (Gudykunst & Mody, 2002).

In the following section, I provide a review of international schools, since it is within a very small group of these schools in China that dual-culture co-principals lead and manage, and it is in the context of some of these schools that I wish to analyze this leadership model.

2.7.5 Adult Ego Development and personality

Although the concepts of Adult Ego Development (AED) and personality may not be directly related to this section on ‘leadership and culture’ (Section 2.7), recent work on AED and personality is of interest here as these concepts may relate to the *transitions* made by individuals (e.g. solo principals) as they enter a dual-culture co-principal role and a new school context (i.e. an international school in China). Carr et al (2018) refer to rather dated work by Leithwood, Bagley and Cousins (1992), claiming that school headteachers and principals “typically face very challenging problems, where there is no clear process to follow, where interpretation is highly subjective, and where sophisticated understandings of the school environment are required to achieve the best solution” (Carr et al, 2018, p. 1). Carr et al (ibid) also note that, according to Ball, Maguire and Braun (2012), the way that school headteachers and principals interact with their school environment is not adequately understood. The ‘challenging problems’ faced by principals are referred to by Heifetz (2009) as adaptive challenges, and Carr et al (ibid) add that such problems are person-oriented and require sophisticated interpersonal skills to solve.

Several authors claim that the work of principals in solving complex organizational issues relies heavily on their *sense-making* abilities, and earlier work by Loevinger (1976, 1979) and Kegan (1982, 1994) claim that these abilities are a function of a person’s ego. Adult Ego Development (AED) occurs in stages and aligns with a growth in understanding, insight, and improvements in the appropriateness of organizing actions. Loevinger’s model of AED, for example, proposes a developmental sequence that comprises nine stages: Pre-social; Impulsive; Self-protective; Conformist; Self-aware; Conscientious; Individualistic; Autonomous; and Integrated; Kegan’s model proposes five stages. Each subsequent stage represents a qualitatively different and more complex way of sense-making (Carr et al, 2018). It would seem reasonable to suggest that the principals who enter their dual-culture co-principalship may do so while at a different AED stage in their AED journey.

Bauer and McAdams (2010) and Helson and Roberts (1994) state that movement between AED stages often occurs in response to disequilibrating events, and James et al (2017) claim that the functioning of an individual’s ego and its development pathway is affected by the individual’s personality, but in complex ways. While Carr et al (2018) state that “personality characteristics and ego function are distinct and different” (p 1), they add that very little is known about school

headteachers' and principals' AED stages and personalities, the way that these characteristics shape their leadership practice, and the way school headteachers and principals solve complex problems.

Carr et al (2018) state that the relationship between AED and personality characteristics in adults is of both theoretical and practical interest and add that particular AED and personality characteristics may impact substantially on their leadership capability in their role. While personality characteristics are modelled in different ways, the authors describe two: Paunonen & Ashton's (2001) 'Big Five' model, which encompasses: Openness; Conscientiousness; Extroversion; Agreeableness; and Neuroticism; and De Vries' (2013) 'HEXACO' model, which encompasses: Honesty/Humility (H); Emotionality (E); Extroversion (X); Agreeableness (A); Conscientiousness (C); and Openness to Experience (O).

2.8 International Schools

2.8.1 Introduction to international schools

While co-principalships described in the literature have in most cases been found to exist in schools within domestic education systems (see Section 2.5), the dual-culture co-principalships that are the focus of this enquiry operate in 'international schools'. In this section, I review some of the relevant literature on international schools in order to provide some background for the contexts of my enquiry.

From a 'western' perspective (if I may use this term), not all 'overseas' schools would be considered 'international schools' by some authors. Cambridge and Thompson (2000), for example, suggest that the entire collection of these schools be termed 'schools in an international context' and would include 'international schools' as a *subset*.

Originally set up around the world to cater for the "internationally mobile professional elite" (Tate, 2016, p. 19) and to offer an ideologically-driven international education (Tate, *ibid*), the diversity in the nature and type of international schools has increased and their number dramatically increased since the first 'international schools' were set up in 1924 (Hayden, 2006); as of 2017 there were 9,319 English-medium K-12 international schools around the globe (ISC, 2017a). A review of international school literature reveals that there may be some agreement on some common aspects of 'international schools' despite their great diversity: the use of an international curriculum (Ronsheim, 1970), the teaching of two or more languages learned as part of the curriculum (Terwilliger, 1972), an environment which promotes an education fostering international understanding (Hill, 2002), and the diversity of student and teacher populations (Gellar, 1993; Hayden & Thompson, 1996).

2.8.2 Definitions and categories

Attempts at producing a single definition for an ‘international school’ were not possible three decades ago (Matthews, 1988) and efforts continue to meet with challenges since the diversity of these schools precludes one from doing so (Cambridge & Thompson, 2000; Murphy, 2002). Over the past few decades, a host of authors have attempted to define what an international school is or to describe overarching characteristics of international schools (Fox, 1985; Gellar, 1993; Hill, 2002; Jonietz, 1991; Knight & Leach, 1964; Leach, 1969; Matthews, 1988; Pönisch, 1987; Renaud, 1974; Ronsheim, 1970; Sanderson, 1980; Sylvester, 1998; Terwilliger, 1972). A very recent and notably inclusive definition states that an international school is one that “delivers a curriculum to any combination of pre-school, primary or secondary students, wholly or partly in English outside an English-speaking country” (Brummitt & Keeling, 2013, p. 25; see also ISC, 2017b). This most recent definition of an ‘international school’ may itself be flawed since it excludes well-known international schools such as the United Nations International School in New York and Atlantic College in the UK (Walker, 2016).

Paralleling repeated attempts at defining international schools are incessant efforts at categorizing them. Several authors, for example, have attempted to categorize international schools according to various criteria (Lallo & Resnik, 2008; Leach, 1969; Pönisch, 1987; Sanderson, 1980) which I will not expand upon in this paper; Cambridge and Thompson (2000) provide a thorough review of the history of the classification of international schools and discuss the validity of various classification models.

A recent attempt at classifying international schools has been made by Hayden and Thompson (2013) who suggest that they be placed into one of three categories: ‘Type A’ - ‘traditional’ international schools “established principally to cater for globally mobile expatriate families for whom the local education system is not considered appropriate” (p 5); ‘Type B’ - ‘ideological’ international schools “established principally on an ideological basis” (p 5); and ‘Type C’ - ‘non-traditional’ international schools “established principally to cater for ‘host country nationals’” (p 5). Referring to the takeover of some ‘Type A’ schools by commercial/for-profit operators, Bunnell (2016a) proposed that a new category (‘Type D’ or ‘Type A1’) be made to accommodate them, thus creating yet another categorization framework. Although it has been suggested that continued attempts at categorizing ‘international schools’ should cease (Hayden, 2006), I will adopt Hayden and Thompson’s (2013) categories as they are useful for identifying the contexts of this enquiry.

2.8.3 Leadership in international schools

I have previously discussed the potential impact of culture, both societal/national and organizational, on leadership (Section 2.7). Might the concept and practice of leadership be different when considering principals working in domestic versus international schools? I will not endeavor to make any such comparisons in this paper. However, I would like to highlight literature that speaks to certain aspects of leadership in the context of international schools which may be relevant to my research questions and the aim of this enquiry.

Challenges unique to international schools

Keller (2015) references Brummitt's claim that leaders of international schools find themselves in challenging situations due to the quickly growing and poorly defined international school sector (Brummitt & Keeling, 2013). Challenges unique to international school settings have also been described by other authors: 'internationalizing' the curriculum (Wylie, 2008); micro-political conflicts (Caffyn, 2010); school board micromanagement (Keller, 2015); and bridging across cultural dualities (Keller, 2015).

Tenure

Hawley's (1994, 1995) rather outdated studies of the turnover of heads in international schools showed an average tenure for leaders of 2.8 years. His studies, though, examined only one type of international school at the time: US-accredited overseas schools. The main reason for heads leaving their school related to issues with the board (e.g. micromanagement and poor governance), yet a significant number of respondents reported issues related to the host country environment. Benson's (2011) more recent study (perhaps more representative of international schools globally) of the turnover of international school heads showed an average tenure for leaders of 3.7 years. While noting several possible reasons for the increase in average tenure (with governance issues again being a prominent issue), Benson's (ibid) study describes a variety of issues influencing the *still* relatively low tenure of heads of international schools, several of which may be of relevance to this research enquiry: the language of the host country, prior teaching experience in international schools, and the host country environment.

Role stress

Although Hawley's (1994, 1995) or Benson's (2011) studies on chief administrator turnover did not appear to mention role stress specifically as a reason for the relatively low tenure of heads of international schools, Bunnell's (2006) paper on role stress is of interest here. Citing Cambridge (2002) and Richards (2002), Bunnell (ibid) notes that the lack of formal research

and discussion on ‘role stress’ in the literature on international schools seems surprising given the acceptance that international schools experience a high level of turnover of teachers, students, administrators and trustees. Referring to work on ‘role stress’ by Pettegrew and Wolfe (1982), Bunnell (ibid) notes that ‘role stress’ encompasses five subsets: role ambiguity (the absence of clear or adequate information about the role); role overload (the absence of sufficient resources to perform the role); role conflict (the presence of two or more incompatible work demands); and role preparedness (stress due to feelings of a lack of competency or preparation). Bunnell claims elsewhere, without evidence, that role stress amongst staff in international schools is “probably linked to the ad hoc manner in which many international schools have grown, resulting in a complex organizational structure” (2004, p. 22).

Induction and training

Referring to staff in international schools, Bunnell (2005) claims that few schools offer a comprehensive induction-training programme, and states that this issue led the European Council of International Schools (ECIS) to produce an induction guide for new teachers (see Langford, Pearce, Rader, & Sears, 2002). Bunnell (ibid) cites several authors who have described challenges for teachers taking on positions at international schools for the first time, where, unlike with other international companies where appointments are made overseas, they are expected to learn on the job and given little cross-cultural training (Pearce, 1998), and they are expected to have an insight into the nature of the accepted diversity and variation of international schools (Hayden & Thompson, 1998). Finally, Bunnell (ibid) refers to literature that speaks to the challenges of working in a multicultural environment (see Van Oord & Kranenburg, 2004). Since the possibility exists that the lack of induction and training for staff in some international schools includes principals taking on leadership positions in these schools, these issues should be considered here.

2.9 The legitimacy of international schools

The number of international schools in Asia (including Western Asia and the Middle East) has experienced an incredible increase in enrolment over the five-year period from 2012 to 2017 (see Section 1.2). This rapid increase of international schools has attracted more attention from international education researchers, and a surge in calls for these schools to secure legitimacy has appeared recently in the literature (Bunnell, 2016b; Bunnell et al, 2016b, 2016c; Hallgarten, Tabberer, & McCarthy, 2015).

Justifications for these calls to secure legitimacy have been varied: “the challenge of unifying and bringing together the diversity of international schools into some form of alliance or

system” (Bunnell, 2016a, p. 227); the need for a less precarious working environment for international school educators e.g. through a ‘new’ system of regulation, protection and representation (Bunnell, 2016c; Standing, 2014); to create an international system for schools which exist outside national systems (Bunnell, 2016a), a theoretical area that Hayden (2011) refers to as a ‘transnational space’; to reposition and reimagine the role and purpose of international schools (Bunnell, 2016a); and to prevent further ‘diluting’ of the ‘distinctiveness’ of the international school ‘model’ or identity (Bunnell, 2016a). Perhaps more pointedly, authors are suggesting that institutions calling themselves ‘international schools’ “actively provide evidence to justify their continued existence and to support and establish their legitimacy” (Bunnell et al, 2016c, p. 6). A review of this literature leaves one with the impression that their references are to the ‘newer’ ‘Type C’ international schools. Whatever the reasons or motives, what seems obvious is that this new drive for international school legitimacy comes as a result of the rapid increase in the number of ‘Type C’ international schools in some parts of the world (Bunnell, 2016b; Bunnell et al, 2016b, 2016c) - see also Section 1.2, “Rationale for this enquiry”.

A cursory review of these legitimacy efforts reveals an arguably Euro-/Anglo-centric and normative force behind them. Referring to Brummitt and Keeling’s (2013) definition of ‘international school’, Bunnell et al (2016c) state that “they [the problems with the definition] relate to the Anglo-centric nature of the definition of International Schools as being those schools providing an English-medium curriculum outside and English-speaking country” (p 4, 5), and Haywood (2015) notes that international schooling was a “product of Western, largely Anglophone, philosophy and practice” (p 53). Hallgarten et al (2015) refer to a hypothetical international school “brand” (p 2), yet it remains unclear as to what this ‘brand’ was or is. Bunnell et al (2016b) claim that ‘Type A’ international schools (the traditional type) provide an international curriculum “mainly for pragmatic reasons” (p 3), yet one might ask, what is not pragmatic about Chinese families enrolling their children into ‘Type C’ international schools?

Finally, Bunnell (2016b) states that, “researchers, such as myself, need to be able to prove we are involved in studying a legitimate area of education” (p 20). It appears that some researchers would be better able to justify their existence if international schools sought to prove their legitimacy. While this is a ‘hard pill to swallow’, it does seem likely that ‘Type C’ international schools, due to their rapidly increasing number, will face increasing pressure to establish themselves as legitimate institutions. Yet, how can a school establish legitimacy for itself, and what criteria would one use to do so? One potential framework by which international schools might establish legitimacy for themselves, Scott’s (2014) institutional theory framework, has

been proposed for consideration by several authors (Bunnell, 2016b; Bunnell et al, 2016b, 2016c).

2.10 Institutional theory

For those of us who have worked in schools for some time, it may seem strange to think of your school as an ‘institution’. Among several different definitions listed for ‘institution’, the Oxford Dictionary (Oxford, 2018) provides several that are relevant here: “an organization founded for a religious, educational, professional, or social purpose”; “an established official organization having an important role in a society”; “an established law or practice”. In this section, I provide a brief overview of institutionalism and institutional theory and will then describe aspects of this theory that relate to a potential requirement of all dual-culture co-principals as they lead and manage their international school, an institution, in the context of the changing global international school landscape: the need to secure legitimacy for their school.

Institutional analyses in education have been occurring for more than a century due to the importance of formal education within modern societies (Meyer & Rowan, 2006). Meyer & Rowan (2006) claim that “a basic assumption of institutional thinking (old or new) is that large institutional complexes such as education, and the practices they give rise to, are contingent and contested” (p 3) - social institutions such as education can take different shapes and forms. In addition, traditional institutional analyses of educational organizations changed in the 1970s when organizational scholars noted that they did not appear to conform to key principles of organizational theory (Meyer & Rowan, 2006). Since the 1990s, a theoretical perspective known as the “new institutionalism” has contributed to new understandings “in academic fields that contribute to educational research and policy analysis, including sociology, political science, economics, and organization theory” (Meyer & Rowan, 2006, p. 1). The key to explaining the observed anomalies in education (e.g. related to: ‘tight’ versus ‘loose’ coupling, links between teaching & learning and the formal structure of schools), according to several authors (March, 1980; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Meyer & Scott, 1983), was to view educational organizations as *institutional* organizations i.e. “as organizations whose most important constraint was not efficiency but rather legitimacy” (p 5). Applications of the new institutionalism to the study of education, however, have been scattered and diffuse” (Bacharach, Masters, & Mundell, 1995; Meyer & Rowan, 2006).

Institutional theory suggests that an organization becomes a legitimate institution if there is a “general perception or assumption that the actions of an entity [i.e. a school] are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs and definitions” (Suchman, 1995, p. 547). A determination of whether or not an institution is

legitimate requires the positioning of an organization within its “wider social context” (Bunnell et al, 2016c, p. 6) in order to determine if there is “congruence between the social values associated with or implied by (organizational) activities and the norms of acceptable behaviour in the larger social system” (in Bunnell et al, 2016c, p. 6; Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975, p. 122). Institutions are thus repositories of taken-for-granted cognitive schemata that shape people’s understandings of the world they live in and provide scripts to guide their action. The emphasis in the new institutionalism, then, is on how people actively construct meaning within institutionalized settings through language and other symbolic representations” (Meyer & Rowan, 2006).

Scott’s institutional theory framework

An institutionalization framework may be employed by which an organization can be deemed legitimate or not, and a framework proposed by Scott (2014) is one that I will adopt for my research enquiry and aim (see Section 3.2). Scott’s framework is presented in Table 1 below.

Carriers of Institutionalization	The Regulative Pillar	The Normative Pillar	The Cultural–Cognitive Pillar
Symbolic systems	Rules Laws Standards	Values Expectations	Categories Typifications Schema Frames
Relational systems	Governance systems Power systems	Regimes Authority systems	Structural isomorphism
Activities	Monitoring Sanctioning Disrupting	Roles Jobs Routines Habits Repertoires of collective action	Predispositions Scripts
Artefacts	Objects complying with mandated specifications	Objects meeting conventions and standards	Objects possessing symbolic value

Table 1: The institutional pillars and carriers of institutionalization (Scott, 2014, p. 96)

The framework is comprised of three distinct elements or ‘pillars’ that underpin and support institutionalization: the regulative, the normative, and the cultural-cognitive pillars. Orthogonal to these three elements are four types of ‘carriers’ that convey and communicate these pillars (Jepperson, 1991; Scott, 2014): symbolic systems, relational systems, activities and artefacts. Brief descriptions of the pillars and carriers, adopted from Scott (2014) and Bunnell et al (2016b) follow.

The three pillars of institutionalization

Regulative pillar

The regulative pillar refers to explicit regulative processes of rule-setting, monitoring, and sanctioning activities. Regulative processes involve the capacity to establish rules, inspect or review others' conformity to them, and direct sanctions, rewards or punishments in an attempt to influence future behaviour.

Normative pillar

A normative conception stresses a deeper, moral base for assessing legitimacy, and so the normative pillar involves the values and norms of an institution - the 'preferred' or the 'desirable' - along with the creation of standards by which existing structures or behaviours are measured. The normative approach to institutions emphasizes how values and normative frameworks structure choices.

Cultural-cognitive pillar

Bunnell et al (2016c) state that the cultural-cognitive pillar is concerned with shared conceptions of the nature of reality and "the common sense-making schema that enable meaning-making and interpretation" (p 9), and the authors add that an institution promotes and cultivates a particular 'thought-style' (see also Douglas, 1986).

A cognitive conception of institutions stresses the central role played by the socially mediated construction of a common framework of meaning and thus the cultural-cognitive pillar stresses the centrality of cognitive elements of institutions: the rules and symbols that constitute the nature of reality and the frames through which meaning is made. Meanings arise in interaction, and they are preserved and modified by human behaviour - Geertz (1973) warns us that to isolate meaning systems from their related behaviours is to commit the error of locking cultural analysis away from its proper object, the informal logic of actual life.

For cognitive theorists, compliance occurs in many circumstances because other types of behaviour are inconceivable; routines are followed because they are taken for granted as 'the way we do these things.' The cognitive view insists that much of the coherence of social life is due to the creation of categories of social actors, both individual and collective, and associated ways of acting.

Compared with the regulative element of institutional theory, Scott (2014) states that the normative element stresses a deeper, moral base for assessing legitimacy - "normative controls

are much more likely to be internalized than are regulative controls” (p 74). Moreover, the level of the cultural-cognitive element is the deepest of the three pillars, since it “rests on preconscious, taken-for-granted understandings” (Scott, 2014, p. 74).

The four carriers of institutionalization

Symbolic systems

From an institutionalization perspective, symbols encompass “rules, values and norms, classifications frames, schemas, prototypes and scripts” (Scott, 2014 p.97).

Relational systems

Relational carriers are patterns of interaction within role systems. These social structures are often widely shared and therefore create similar forms, which is the basis of structural isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983).

Activities

For the regulative pillar, activities encompass monitoring, sanctioning, and disrupting, which are those activities that ensure compliance. For the normative pillar, activities include roles, jobs/tasks, routines, customs and repertoires of co-operation and for the cultural-cognitive pillar they comprise shared predispositions and scripts.

Artefacts

These are material objects, deliberately created under the influence of the cultural or physical environment (Suchman, 2003). In the context of institutionalization, they are objects that: comply with mandated specifications (regulative pillar); meet conventions and standards (normative pillar); and possess symbolic value (cultural-cognitive pillar).

Institutional Primary Task

For an institution to be a legitimate institution, according to some institutional theory researchers, it must have an institutional ‘primary task’, “the task that it [the institution] must perform to survive” (Rice, 1963, p. 13). Bunnell et al (2016b) claim that the institutional primary task is “what the members of the institution must work on if their institutional work is to be legitimate” (p 6) and suggest that the primary task of an international school is the provision of an ‘international curriculum’. In addition to not defining ‘international curriculum’, the authors omit from their explanation of the concept of primary task that an institution may have more than one primary task, that the primary task(s) may change with

time, and that the primary task(s) may have constraints placed on it (them) by the external environment (Rice, 1963), all relevant considerations for international schools operating in, for example, China.

2.11 Legitimacy and schools as complex institutions

Carr et al (2018) state that school headteachers and principals are responsible for the conduct of very complex institutions. Thus, establishing the legitimacy of a school appears to be more challenging due to the complex nature of educational institutions (Fertig & James, 2016). Hawkins and James (2017) argue that “complexity as a foundational aspect of schools is still not adequately acknowledged” (p 1) despite Weick (1976) decades ago defining the organizational characteristics of schools as ‘loosely coupled’ which, as Hawkins and James (ibid) suggest, hint at their complexity. Leading and managing in schools, Weick stated, configure and are configured by this complexity.

Acknowledging a range of problems with complexity theories e.g. that they are a “wide-ranging and unwieldy body of ideas and concepts” (Boulton, Allen, & Bowman, 2015; referenced by Hawkins & James, 2017, p. 2) and metaphorical, Hawkins and James (ibid) examine schools using a systemic perspective through the *dimensions* of complexity in human systems. The authors claim that *interactions* are the central dimension of these human systems, stating that “schools are places where there is a high level of interaction” (ibid, p 3) and, citing Bunnell et al (2016b, 2016c), emphasize the importance of the legitimacy of these interactions in playing a “significant part in institutionalization” (p 9).

Hawkins and James (ibid) create an organizational/institutional perspective on schools as complex, evolving, loosely linked systems (CELLS) and identify five main systems of a school as a whole-school system. They allocate the leadership and management team of the school as a sub-system of *one* of these five main systems, the teaching staff system. The dual-culture co-principals, then, would no doubt represent a significant sub-system and if this is the case, from a CELLS perspective of schools, the interactions between the dual-culture co-principals may play an important role in their efforts at securing legitimacy for their international school.

Of the dimensions of complexity listed by Hawkins and James (ibid), I argue that there are several that should be considered with respect to the interactions between the co-principals: the heterogeneity of the interactors (they are from different cultures); the opportunities for interaction (how often do they communicate?); interactions have a historical dimension (each co-principal arrives in the relationship with a different culture and background); interactions are motivated and intentional (the co-principals may be motivated by different things);

interactions are affected by interactional capability (intercultural competency, for one - see Section 2.7.4); and interactions change those interacting (the co-principals may have some impact on each other as a result of their interactions). The authors also describe a variety of consequences of these dimensions and interactions that may be of relevance to this enquiry, for example: interrelationships develop through interaction (the co-principal relationship may develop as they interact); patterns of interaction develop (the co-principals may establish patterns as they interact); and there is capacity for self-organization (the co-principals organize their working relationship in a manner that suits their context).

With respect to the pillars of Scott's (2014) institutional theory framework referred to earlier, the relational carriers would appear to be important carriers in an analysis of dual-culture co-principals and legitimacy - relational carriers in this enquiry would be the patterns of interaction between the co-principals (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Finally, Bunnell et al (2016b, 2016c) claim that the institutional primary task, in conditioning institutionalizing activities that relate to the three pillars of institutionalization, in turn conditions interactions within the school, including interactions at the micro-level of individual actors (Boulton et al, 2015). Thus, it remains to be seen if the international school's primary task conditions the interactions of the dual-culture co-principals and/or others.

2.12 Dual-culture co-principals: leading, managing and ensuring international school legitimacy

In order to secure legitimacy for their *international* school, a solo principal would need to both define the institutional primary task for the school as well as regulate the interactions between the school and its external environment - here, 'environment' refers to the economic, social and political surroundings (Rice, 1963). Given that the primary task has a central place in a legitimate institution (Bunnell et al, 2016b), the leadership and management provided by a principal in steering the school towards this primary task may be challenging due to the more complex nature of international school environments (Fertig & James, 2016) – see Section 2.12.

Perhaps compounding these challenges is the nature of a dual-culture co-principalship. If we consider the definitions of societal culture shared in Section 2.7.1, it is not clear what impact their different cultures and backgrounds would have on their efforts to jointly lead and manage their school, to secure legitimacy for their school (e.g. to be 'international' (Fertig & James, 2016)), and to steer their school towards its institutional primary task.

On one hand, one might imagine that a dual-culture co-principalship would have benefits with respect to regulating the interactions between the school and its external environment, as

Bunnell's (2008) 'risk reducing arrangement' benefit speaks to. However, the dual-culture nature of this leadership model may also present challenges with respect to ensuring institutional legitimacy if one considers the normative and cultural-cognitive pillars and several of the carriers of Scott's (2014) institutional theory framework.

Briefly reviewing this framework again, normative systems consist of both norms and values. Scott (2014) states that values are "conceptions of the preferred or desirable together with the construction of standards to which existing structure or behaviours can be compared and assessed" (p 23), and norms both define goals and "designate appropriate ways to pursue them" (p 23). For the normative pillar, the symbolic carrier emphasizes shared values and normative expectations that guide behaviour, and the activities carrier includes all the ways in which social action is structured, including roles. Cultural-cognitive systems consist of "the shared conceptions that constitute the nature of social reality and create the frames through which meaning is made" (Scott, 2014, p. 28). The symbolic carrier comprises "common categories, distinctions, and typifications as shaping perceptions and interpretations" (p 24), and the activities carrier involves predispositions, scripts, habitualized behaviour and decision-making.

With respect to the normative pillar, it is uncertain how the possibly different values and norms held by the dual-culture co-principals impact on their shared interpretations of significant school matters, their shared influencing actions, and their shared decision-making processes. Scott (2014) states that some values and norms in an institution apply only to selected types of actors or positions, giving rise to roles: "conceptions of appropriate goals and activities for particular individuals or specified positions" (p 22). Apart from the guidance provided by job descriptions, co-principals with different experiences and from different cultures may hold different conceptions of what a principal *should* do because of the norms and values they bring to their shared leadership space. Referring to the research of several other authors (Gerstner & Day, 1994; Hofstede, 1984), Hallinger and Leithwood (1998) state that "the broader societal culture exerts an influence on administrators beyond the influence exerted by a specific organization's culture" (pp 128, 129), and Gerstner and Day (1994) note that "because leadership is a cultural phenomenon, inextricably linked to the values and customs of a group of people, we do not expect differences in leadership prototypes to be completely random. Rather, they should be linked to dimensions of national culture" (p 123).

Scott's (2014) use of the hyphenated label 'cultural-cognitive' for the cultural-cognitive pillar "emphasizes that internal interpretive processes are shaped by external cultural frameworks" (p 30), and, referring to the cultural-cognitive elements of institutions, he claims that they are the "shared conceptions that constitute the nature of social reality and create the frames through which meaning is made" (p 28). Scott (ibid) also notes the different levels of culture that impact

on institutions, but referring to cultural conceptions, he states that “persons in the same situation can perceive the situation quite differently - in terms of both what is and what ought to be” (pp 31, 32). The two co-principals in a dual-culture co-principalship, then, may bring to their interactions different conceptions and may interpret matters differently.

Leadership researchers by and large have excluded such considerations in their studies - the knowledge base used for informing policy, practice and leadership development globally has been informed largely by theory and empirical research from western cultural contexts, without consideration of other cultural contexts (Dimmock & Walker, 2000a; Hallinger, 2010, 2011; Hallinger & Bryant, 2013; Walker & Dimmock, 2002). Hallinger (1995) states that “the importance of cultural context for theory and practice in administration, though generally overlooked, should not be underestimated” (p 3).

2.13 Summary

In this chapter, I have provided a review of literature and concepts that set the foundation for this enquiry into the leadership and management provided by dual-culture co-principals in international schools in China. The review of literature process was a rather dynamic one, in the sense that new concepts and literature were being considered and reviewed before and during the interviewing phase of the enquiry as questions and issues arose related to the sense-making and decision-making processes of the dual-culture co-principals and their contexts of international schools in China.

So, for example, while literature related to principalships, leadership, management, co-principalships, distributed leadership, culture, and international schools were reviewed early in the review phase, literature related to role stress and role ambiguity emerged as concepts for review only when I began to consider the challenges presented to principals entering leadership positions in international schools. The need to review literature related to legitimacy and institutional theory did not emerge until I began to consider the dual-culture and shared nature of the dual-culture co-principalship and the changing landscape of international schools in China (see Section 1.2). Finally, it was only after the interviewing phase began and categories started to emerge that several other concepts became important to review, such as Adult Ego Development (AED), personality and ‘small cultures’. The final part of the literature review served to establish a connection between the concepts of dual-culture co-principalships, international schools and legitimacy for purposes of completing the conceptual background for this enquiry.

The ability of dual-culture co-principals to secure legitimacy for their international school in China through their leadership and management may be especially challenging if we consider the normative and cultural-cognitive pillars of institutional theory, the complexity of schools, the greater complexity of international schools, and the dual-culture co-principals' shared responsibility of defining and steering their school towards its primary task. The co-principals' different societal cultures and backgrounds may impact: i) how they interpret and make sense of situations, ii) how they come to make decisions, iii) the interactions of the co-principals, iv) their ability to carry out their school's primary task, and v) the legitimacy of their international school.

In the next chapter, I provide an overview of the research philosophy, methodology and research design for this enquiry.

Chapter 3 - Research Philosophy, Methodology and Research Design

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I begin by providing the reader with the aim of the enquiry, the research questions, and the rationale for both this aim and these questions. I then discuss the philosophical stance I took to achieve this aim and to answer these research questions. The philosophical stance will be explained by establishing the ontological, epistemological and methodological underpinnings for my research. It will be clear from this explanation that the methodology for this research enquiry was qualitative in nature. The choice of a grounded theory process will be explained, and subsequent sub-sections will provide a description of the enquiry design.

3.2 Research aim

The aim of this study was to analyze the leadership and management of dual-culture co-principals in international schools in China. I attempted to accomplish this aim through an analysis of their sense-making and decision-making processes using a critical incident method and thematic analysis. Although the aims of social research have become pluralistic and diverse (Sarantakos, 2012), this enquiry attempted to understand human behaviour and action and to explore social reality in a relatively *limited* context in order to make further research possible (Sarantakos, 2012).

It was also my hope that, by achieving the aim for this enquiry, a better understanding could be gained of the ability of dual-culture co-principals to secure legitimacy for their international school in China through their combined leadership and management - understanding the extent to which dual-culture co-principals have “shared conceptions of the nature of reality and common sense-making” (Bunnell et al, 2016c, p. 11) may have helped to inform legitimization processes for international schools that have adopted this alternative leadership model. My motivation for conducting this research was also related to a desire to inform existing dual-culture co-principals, principals entering the role, and international schools considering the adoption of this leadership model.

3.3 Research questions

The concepts of leadership and management were reviewed in Section 2.3 and 2.4, and were too broad for an analysis of the leadership and management provided by dual-culture co-

principals – these concepts are laden with a range of other concepts, and their usefulness in research has been questioned by others (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003). For this enquiry, then, I needed to consider what aspects of leadership and management could be used for such an analysis.

Typical international schools will have a solo principal who leads and manages the school (perhaps, to some extent, in consultation with members of his/her leadership/management team), and s/he would ultimately make decisions on matters. International schools that have adopted a dual-culture co-principal leadership model operate without a *solo* leader. The question arose, then, of how the *two* principals in a dual-culture co-principalship come together to establish “shared conceptions of the nature of reality and common sense-making” (Bunnell et al, 2016c, p. 11). It seemed reasonable to suggest that dual-culture co-principals *would need to come together to make sense of matters and make decisions on them*.

Thus, I chose to assess the ability of dual-culture co-principals to lead and manage their international school by attempting to understand their sense-making and decision-making processes, guided by the following three research questions:

1. *How do dual-culture co-principals from different cultures and with experiences from different contexts interpret organizational matters?*
2. *What factors influence how dual-culture co-principals from different cultures and with experiences from different contexts interpret organizational matters?*
3. *How do the dual-culture co-principals come to agree on (make decisions on) organizational matters?*

The themes that emerged from the thematic analysis were used to inform answers to these questions.

In addition, as it was also my hope to gain a better understanding of the ability of dual-culture co-principals to secure legitimacy for their international schools in China through their combined leadership and management, the themes were used to inform this understanding. The legitimacy of an organization will be conferred by the internal and external stakeholders who, through observations of the organization, make evaluations by comparing the organization to particular criteria or standards (Deephouse, Bundy, Tost, & Suchman, 2017). According to Scott’s institutional theory framework (Scott, 2014), these criteria are found in the institutional ‘pillars’ and ‘carriers’ (see Section 2.10) and may be used to determine the extent to which an

organization is ‘legitimate’ and fulfills its institutional primary task (Bunnell, Fertig, & James, 2016a). With the above in mind, dual-culture co-principals tasked with leading and managing an international school have the responsibility of securing and maintaining the legitimacy of their school as they attempt to steer their school towards the achievement of its primary task, “the task that it [the institution] must perform to survive” (Rice, 1963, p. 13). Thus, in order to assess the co-principals’ ability to secure and maintain this legitimacy, the emerged themes were examined through the lens of Scott’s (ibid) institutional theory framework.

Having established the aim for this research enquiry and the research questions that will be used to achieve this aim, a philosophical stance was then taken, a research methodology chosen and a research design planned - their descriptions and the justification for my choices are provided in the following sections.

3.4 Research philosophy

3.4.1 Introduction

A variety of terms have been used by social researchers to describe the different ‘worldviews’ one can assume when undertaking social research. Cresswell (2014), quoting Guba (1990a) defines ‘worldview’ as “a basic set of beliefs that guide action” (p 17), and suggests that these beliefs have also been called by terms such as paradigms (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011), epistemologies and ontologies (Crotty, 1998), or ‘broadly conceived research methodologies’ (Neuman, 2009). I will attempt to describe my ‘worldview’ for this research enquiry and to clarify my use of these terms in this and the subsequent sub-sections.

I found Crotty’s (1998) four elements of the research process very helpful for structuring my own ‘worldview’ and philosophical stance for this enquiry, as well as for the planning of the research design and methodology for it. These four elements (Crotty, 1998, p. 4) are shown in Figure 1 on the following page.

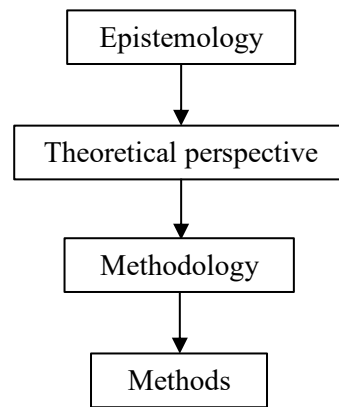


Figure 1: An overview of the research process

Answering the research questions for this enquiry involved getting a handle on the interpretive, sense-making and decision-making processes of the dual-culture co-principals. Such an attempt suggested that I needed to delve into a “naturalistic, interpretive domain, guided by the standards and principles of a relativist orientation” (Sarantakos, 2012).

In the following sub-sections I discuss the philosophical underpinnings and methodology for this enquiry that I considered were best suited for achieving the aim of this enquiry and for answering my research questions. I also expand on the elements displayed in Figure 1, providing the reasons and justifications for my assumptions and philosophical/methodological choices.

3.4.2 Epistemological considerations

Crotty’s (1998) four elements of the research process described in the previous section differ from other authors who include ontology in research philosophy and methodology frameworks (see for example, Creswell, 2014; Sarantakos, 2012). Ontology is the study of being and is “concerned with ‘what is’, with the nature of existence, with the structure of reality” (Crotty, 1998, p. 9), and epistemology concerns our assumptions about the grounds of knowledge, about how we understand the world...how we know what we know, and how we communicate this knowledge to others. A theoretical perspective refers to “our view of the human world and social life within that world” (ibid, p 8) and includes the assumptions that we make in this grounding. Each theoretical perspective embodies a certain way of understanding *what is* (ontology) as well as *what it means to know* (epistemology) (ibid, p 10).

Since “ontological issues and epistemological issues tend to emerge together” and some authors “have trouble keeping ontology and epistemology apart conceptually” (Crotty, 1998, p. 10), I have chosen to begin the description of the philosophical underpinnings for this enquiry with a discussion of my epistemology, bypassing, as with Crotty’s scheme, a discussion of my ontology.

My primary assumption for this enquiry was that the actions and activities of dual-culture co-principals, as they interacted with others and attempted to make sense of matters, were comprised of multiple realities (Yin, 2015) – each co-principal assumed their own ‘reality’ when interpreting issues and interacting with others. An *emic* perspective, then, was taken for the enquiry in that as much as possible I attempted to capture the co-principals’ indigenous meanings of school events; in contrast, an *etic* perspective would have attempted to capture meanings external to the participants (i.e. of the researcher or others outside the research unit) of interactions between the dual-culture co-principals (Yin, 2015).

Easterby-Smith et al (1991) point out that having an epistemological perspective helps to clarify issues of research design and to recognize which designs will work (for a given set of objectives) and which will not. Of the possible choices of subjectivism, constructivism and objectivism for my epistemological stance, I chose constructivism (I use the terms of *constructivism* and *constructionism* interchangeably in this paper).

Palaiologou et al (2015) claim that subjectivism makes the assumption that all perspectives are different ways of making sense in the world and denies the possibility of examining social and physical environments objectively. I rejected this assumption as I maintained that I could objectively attempt to learn about the subjective experiences (realities) of the co-principals through this enquiry.

Referring to objectivism, Yin (2015) asks, citing Eisner & Peshkin (1990), “Are ‘objective’ inquiries about human social affairs even possible?” Objectivism makes the assumption that dealing with objects is external to the mind – the approach to subject matter is characterized by freedom from individual biases or prejudices (Palaiologou et al, 2015). Although it was my assumption that it was possible to objectively enquire about human social affairs - constructivism rejects the objectivist view of human knowledge in that meaning is not discovered but constructed. In emphasizing that different people may construct meaning in different ways (even in relation to the same phenomenon), Crotty asks, “Isn’t this precisely what we find when we move from one era to another or from one culture to another?” (1998, p. 9).

In order to understand the leadership and management provided by dual-culture co-principals through an understanding of their interpretive and decision-making processes, I wished to relive with them (to some extent) their experiences in coming together to make decisions. In doing so, I hoped to better understand the factors that impacted these experiences and these interpretive and decision-making processes. Again, I had assumed that these processes took place in the minds of the co-principals and were subjective in nature. Crotty (1998) states that “truth, or meaning, comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities in our world” (p 9).

It was my assumption that the co-principals not only constructed *their* ‘truths’ and ‘meanings’ on a daily basis individually and when interacting with each other, but they were also re-constructing ‘truths’ and ‘meanings’ when we, participants and interviewer, engaged with each other. Yin (2015) states that, citing Geertz (1973, pp. 9, 15), “the researcher's descriptions may be considered second- or third-order interpretations because they represent the researcher's "constructions of [participants'] constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to" (p 17).

My epistemological stance for this enquiry, then, was constructivism. As Crotty (1998) points out, from a constructivist viewpoint, meaning cannot be described simply as ‘objective’ or ‘subjective’ - humans (and thus the co-principals and I, the interviewer) do not create meaning, but construct it. This perspective embraces both the notion that we are “beings-in-the-world” and the “phenomenological concept of intentionality” (Crotty, 1998, p. 47). I suggest that the co-principals constructed and reconstructed meanings in their minds on a daily basis, and used language as they thought, reflected, and interacted with each other. Moreover, during interviews, I argue that it was likely that the co-principals’ descriptions of matters were also “constructed” (Guba, 1990b). A constructivist stance sees the social world in terms of a process, and such processes (occurring within and between the co-principals), I suggest, were on an individual as well as collective basis and were context-bound (Palaiologou et al, 2015).

Finally, due to my assumption that co-principals constructed and reconstructed meanings, I took on a *postmodernist* point of view for this enquiry (Palaiologou et al, 2015), in that meanings were relative and constantly under construction. Regarding my philosophical approach to this enquiry, it is one that mirrors Yin’s (2015) description of a *pragmatist* worldview, whereby the conduct of this study was positioned somewhere between *positivist* (ontologically realist assumptions) and *constructivist* (relativist assumptions) extremes. Thus, my worldview was assumed to be in the ‘middle’ ground (Gubrium & Holstein, 1998) where multiple perspectives were accepted, and where I hoped to establish limited transferability of findings from one

context to another i.e. it was my hope that the results of this enquiry could help inform other researchers, international school organizations, and existing (or incoming) dual-culture co-principals.

3.4.3 Theoretical perspective

‘Theoretical perspective’ is defined here to mean “the philosophical stance lying behind a methodology” (Crotty, 1998, p. 70). Palaiologou et al (2015) claim that both relativists and interpretivists maintain that reality is not fixed but socially constructed and therefore cannot be examined in an objective manner. The relativistic nature of the sense-making and decision-making processes of the dual-culture co-principals as well as my interpretive efforts when engaging with them meant that, of the two major paradigmatic traditions, positivism and interpretivism (Bassey, 1999), the theoretical perspective of interpretivism would need to provide the basis for the research methodology, research design and methods I employed in this enquiry.

Interpretivism, as the framework within which my research was conducted, “looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world” (Crotty, 1998, p. 67) - there is no, direct, one-to-one relationship between ourselves (subjects) and the world (object) (Gray, 2004), and, as Cohen et al (2013) note, “the central endeavor in the context of the interpretive paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience” (p 17).

Interpretivism is closely linked with constructivism, and I contend that the world (of the co-principals and interviewer) was interpreted through the ‘classification schemas of the mind’ (May & Williams, 1996). Interpretivists consider the description of human action as being tied to particular social, historical and cultural contexts, and emphasize the capacity for reasoning and sense-making as varying from individual to individual, recognizing the role of the researcher as a potential variable in interpreting the world (Gray, 2004).

The combination of selectivity and interpretation was also something that needed to be considered: both co-principals (participants) and I (the researcher) ‘selected’ what questions to ask, what topics to discuss, what issues garnered more attention, and how issues were interpreted. Yin (2015) claims that different realities “emanate from our thought processes” (p 17), and “will show up even (and especially) when describing what might otherwise appear to be a straightforward situation” (p 17).

Thus, whether between the co-principals or between the co-principals and the interviewer, the task of constructing a description became an interpretive matter (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997), if only because of an inevitable selection process – “selectivity occurs because a

descriptive procedure cannot fully cover all the possible actions that could have been observed at a field setting" (Emerson, 2001, p. 17).

Becker (2008) suggests that selectivity can arise because of the researcher's preconceived categories for assigning meaning to actions and their features, and Emerson (2001) claims that "the writer decides not only which particular events are significant, which are merely worthy of inclusion, which are absolutely essential, and how to order these events, but also what is counted as an 'event' in the first place" (p 48).

Having described the philosophical underpinnings for this enquiry through a discussion of my philosophical stance, epistemological considerations, and theoretical perspective, I now move on to a description and justification for my methodology.

3.5 Methodology

3.5.1 Introduction

A purely qualitative methodology and grounded theory approach were adopted for answering my research questions; the reasons for these choices will be provided in the following sub-sections. A mixed-method methodology was not considered for this enquiry since my research involved an attempt to understand something of the subjective experiences of dual-culture co-principals - a realist, objectivist ontology and empiricist epistemology underpinning a quantitative methodology would not have aligned with the type of data (i.e. subjective, relative, value-laden) needed to answer my research questions.

3.5.2 Qualitative methodology

The choice of a qualitative methodology for this enquiry stems from my epistemological stance (constructivism), my theoretical perspective (interpretivism), the nature of the data being collected as well as the process for obtaining them. I adopted Crotty's (1998) three *assumptions* on constructivism (referenced by Creswell, 2014) and have paraphrased them for purposes of justifying my choice of a qualitative methodology for this enquiry:

1. The dual-culture co-principals constructed meanings as they engaged with each other, their school community, the wider community, their city/country, and of course, themselves (as they reflected on matters). In line with qualitative research, semi-structured and unstructured interviews (with open-ended questions) were used, and I did so in order to encourage the co-principals to share their thoughts and opinions.

2. The co-principals engaged with their world and made sense of it based on their historical and social perspectives as well as their different cultures and experiences. As a qualitative researcher, I sought to understand the co-principals' contexts by gathering information *personally*. Burrell (1979) states that the "social world [of the dual-culture co-principals] is essentially relativistic and can only be understood from the point of view of the individuals who are directly involved in the activities which are to be studied" (p 5). Thus, the co-principals could only have been understood by occupying to some extent the frame of reference of the co-principals.
3. The basic generation of meaning is always social, "arising in and out of interaction within a human community" (Creswell, 2014, p. 9), and Crotty (1998) adds that qualitative research is largely inductive. Thus, I *generated* meaning from the data I gathered throughout this enquiry.

As suggested by Yin (2015), and with respect to studying causal processes, my enquiry attempted to focus explicit attention on systematic ways of specifying the potentially related contextual conditions of the co-principals. Yin (ibid) suggests that one needs to attempt to generate discussions with participants which will cover at least two contextual levels. For this enquiry, I attempted to focus on three: the macro-level (i.e. the wider school community and nation), the meso-level (i.e. the teachers, staff and students), and the micro-level (the dual-culture co-principals themselves).

3.5.3 Grounded Theory

I endeavoured to achieve the aim of this enquiry and answer my research questions using a grounded theory process (Glaser, 1992; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). As mentioned in the review of literature chapter, the *academic* literature on co-principalships and even more so on dual-culture co-principalships was scarce. Moreover, since research into the interpretive, sense-making, and decision-making processes of dual-culture co-principalships did not yet exist, grounded theory provided a research design that could serve to understand these processes (Creswell, 2007). The intent of grounded theory is to generate theory that emerges from the data that will come from participants who have experienced the research process (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Grounded theory is a design of inquiry within the interpretivist stream "in which the researcher derives a general, abstract theory of a process, action or interaction grounded in the views of the participants" (Creswell, 2014, p. 14). The defining components of grounded theory

practice, according to Glaser and Strauss (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987) are:

- Simultaneous involvement in data collection and analysis; the grounded theory method involves data collection and analysis occurring at the same time - the collection of data informs and focuses the analysis, and the ongoing analysis informs and focuses the continued collection of data;
- Constructing analytic codes and categories from data, not from preconceived logically deduced hypotheses;
- Using the constant comparative method, which involves making comparisons during each stage of the analysis; Creswell (2014), citing Charmaz (2006) and Corbin & Strauss (2007), states that the grounded theory process involves using multiple stages of data collection and the refinement and interrelationship of categories of information;
- Advancing theory development during each step of data collection and analysis;
- Memo-writing to elaborate categories and specify their properties, defining relationships between categories, and identifying gaps;
- Sampling aimed toward theory construction, not for population representativeness (termed ‘theoretical sampling’);
- Conducting the literature review after developing an independent analysis.

Although researchers commonly use the term ‘grounded theory’ to mean a specific mode of analysis, Charmaz (2005) states that it refers both to a method of enquiry and to the product of enquiry. Grounded theory is ‘grounded’ because “it is related to, emerges out of, is created through and is ‘grounded’ in empirical data” (Sarantakos, 2012, p. 133). Being grounded in data means that this research methodology is close to everyday behaviour, and Sarantakos (2012) notes that the researcher is very much an element in the research process.

Thus far, I have described and justified the epistemology (constructivism), theoretical perspective (interpretivism), and methodology (qualitative, grounded theory) adopted for this enquiry (see Figure 2 on the following page). In the next two sections, I provide a description and justification for the design of this enquiry and the research methods I used to achieve the aim for this enquiry, including an overview of the data collection and analysis processes used.

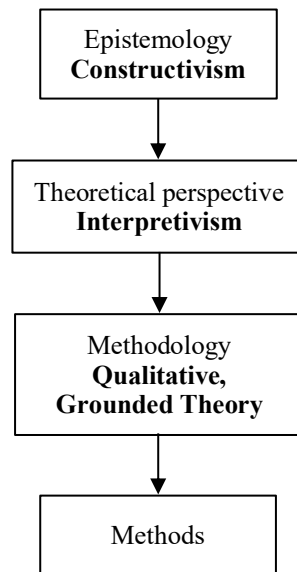


Figure 2: An overview of the research philosophy and methodology

3.6 Research design

3.6.1 Introduction

A *flexible* (as opposed to fixed) qualitative design was used for this enquiry as it allowed freedom of unlimited movement between the different stages of data collection and data analysis, in both directions, using newly discovered information to fine-tune concepts and analysis (Sarantakos, 2012). In addition to having the ability to move back and forth between the different stages of data collection and analysis, I chose this flexible design as I was not certain as to how the data collection stage would proceed and preferred the freedom to make adjustments along the way.

In this section I will provide the reader with a description of my research methods, the selection process for the participants, the institutional authorization for the research, the gaining of permission from participants, the communication with participants, and the organization of data. This section will end with the provision of some initial and brief data on the data collection contexts.

3.6.2 Research methods

Previous co-principalship studies that have attempted to understand the subjective realities of co-principalships have done so through qualitative small-scale case studies (Court, 2004,

2007b) and fieldwork studies (Eckman, 2007; Gronn & Hamilton, 2004), and have involved, for example, ‘tracking’ (Court, 2003b) and in-depth interviews (Eckman, 2007). The results from these studies, though, could not be applied to an understanding of co-principals’ sense-making and decision-making processes, processes that I was also interested in learning about in order to learn about the impact of co-principals’ leadership and management on their ability to secure legitimacy for their international school. Moreover, previous studies were not conducted with co-principal teams of a ‘dual-culture’ form.

Thus, underpinned by a constructivist epistemology and interpretivist theoretical perspective (Gough, 2002), and in line with a flexible, qualitative enquiry (Hammersley, 2013; Sarantakos, 2012) and grounded theory approach (Strauss, 1987), I attempted to answer my research questions using a critical incident method followed by a thematic analysis of semi-structured and unstructured interviews of dual-culture co-principals. The unit of analysis for this study was the two principals of a dual-culture co-principalship at each international school campus visited.

Explanations of the critical incident method and the justification for its use are provided in the next section, followed by descriptions of my interview protocol, selection decisions regarding research participants and the thematic analysis of the interview data.

3.6.2.1 Critical incident method

This research enquiry involved the thematic analysis (Chapman, Hadfield, & Chapman, 2015) of *critical incidents* experienced by ten co-principal teams working in international schools of both ‘Type A’ and ‘Type C’ (Hayden & Thompson, 2013) – see Section 2.8.2. Through the analysis of incidents, it was hoped that something could be learned about how dual-culture co-principals have interpreted events, about the values, beliefs, and experiences that guided those interpretations (Etherington, 2013), and about how they came together to make decisions on significant matters.

The analysis of critical incidents dates back to Flanagan (1954) - this research technique has since been used in many disciplines such as job analysis, nursing, psychology, social work and more (Butterfield, Borgen, Amundson, & Maglio, 2005). A critical incident technique has also been used recently in a range of educational studies (Ahluwalia, 2009; Cottrell & James, 2016; Mohammed, 2016; Savva, 2015). Originally used with an emphasis on direct observation, it is now widely used in retrospective self-reports (Coetzer, Redmond, & Sharafizad, 2012) in order to gain understanding of an incident “from the perspective of the individual, taking into account cognitive, affective and behavioral elements” (ibid, p 168). “This [the critical incident], in

effect, provides a window into an individual's value judgement, allowing for a better understanding of why meaning has been attached to a particular incident" (Savva, 2015, p. 19). "The objective [of the critical incident technique] is to gain understanding of the incident from the perspective of the individual, taking into account cognitive, affective and behavioral elements" (Grant & Trenor, 2010).

There is a lack of consensus in the literature as to what the critical incident technique is (Minghella & Benson, 1995). Thus, while the concept of 'critical incident' is interpreted differently by different practitioners and researchers (Minghella & Benson, 1995; Spencer-Oatey, 2012), Tripp's (1993) definition was the one preferred for my enquiry: "Critical incidents are not 'things' which exist independently of an observer and are awaiting discovery like gold nuggets or desert islands, but like all data, critical incidents are created. Incidents happen, but critical incidents are produced by the way we look at a situation: a critical incident is an interpretation of the significance of an event" (p 8).

The 'critical incident method' is "a qualitative interview procedure, which facilitates the investigation of significant occurrences (events, incidents, process or issues), identified by the respondent, the way they are managed, and the outcomes in terms of perceived effects. The objective is to gain an understanding of the incident from the perspective of the individual, taking into account cognitive, affective and behavioral elements" (Chell, 2004, p. 48). Finally, referring to Tripp (1993), Savva (2015) states that "while the nature of critical incidents can vary, all hold significance to the individual who chooses to recount them. Indeed, the act of recalling what took place, and choosing to recount it, is itself an indicator of an event's criticality" (p 19).

Tripp (1993) notes that "the vast majority of critical incidents, however, are not at all dramatic or obvious: they are straightforward accounts of very commonplace events that occur in routine professional practice which are critical in the rather different sense that they are indicative of underlying trends, motives and structures. These incidents appear to be 'typical' rather than 'critical' at first sight but are rendered critical through analysis" (p 24, 25).

Serrat (2010) emphasizes that a 'critical incident' is not an incident that is necessarily 'critical' i.e. it is not an incident that represents 'a turning point or specially important juncture' or an incident that is 'crucial' or 'decisive' (Merriam-Webster dictionary 2018). In other words, the 'incident' does not necessarily need to be significant in nature. Rather, "we create a *critical incident* through analysis. That is, an *incident* becomes a *critical incident* as a result of our *critical thinking* about it [italics are the author's]" (Ayres, 2013). The 'incidents' that I wished to engage with when interviewing the dual-culture co-principals became 'critical incidents' in

the sense that they were *critiqued* during the data analysis stage. Although Flanagan (1954) provides a five-step process for his critical incident method (see also Hughes, Williamson, & Lloyd, 2007), I will describe in Section 3.6.2.3 the process that I used.

3.6.2.2 Selection of participants

For this enquiry, I decided to focus on existing dual-culture co-principalships in China, for several reasons in addition to those provided in the “Rationale for this enquiry” (Section 1.2):

1. This leadership model was in current use in several international school networks in China (please refer to Section 2.6).
2. My work location was in China at the time of this enquiry - the close physical proximity to many of these co-principalships made it relatively easy to arrange for personal interviews of some of the principals. In addition, the close proximity also allowed for relatively easy follow-up should I have needed clarification on issues arising from interviews.
3. My employment in one of the international school networks using this leadership model generated in me a great interest in learning more about the Chinese-foreign dual-culture co-principalship model.

In the review of literature chapter, I discussed the different types of international schools (see Section 2.8). It was also of interest to me to learn about this leadership model as it operated in the different contexts of ‘Type A’ and ‘Type C’ international schools - the different types of international schools could provide both a greater scope for the research and the possibility of discovering to what extent (if any) the context (i.e. the type of international school) impacted a dual-culture co-principalship with respect to their sense-making and decision-making processes. Analyzing the dual-culture co-principal leadership model within ‘Type A’ and ‘Type C’ international schools might also have shed some light on the impact (if any) of context on the co-principals’ ability to secure legitimacy for their school.

Thus, I selected for participation in this enquiry dual-culture co-principals currently working in these two types of international schools in China; ten co-principal pairs were selected from among ten international school campuses within these two international school networks. Of these ten co-principal teams, seven were interviewed personally and three were interviewed via Skype due to their distant locations in China.

In one of the two international school networks, all campuses were led and managed by two principals (one Chinese, one foreign), officially called ‘co-principals’. In the other international

school network, not all of its campuses operated with Chinese and foreign principals officially called ‘co-principals’. For these few cases, I decided to interview two principals (one Chinese, one foreign) who jointly led and managed a division (e.g. Primary school division) on their campus. In all cases, I refer to these principals as ‘co-principals’.

I selected a co-principal team at one of the international school campuses to conduct a mock/trial interview with, in advance of the interviews of the ten co-principal pairs selected for this study. The purpose of the trial/mock interview was to try my questions and to determine if the interview protocol I had set up would be effective.

Information about each co-principal and their school contexts was been limited for ethical reasons (see Ethical considerations, Section 3.7). Table 2 below provides the identification system used for the ten co-principal teams (20 participants), the number of years the co-principals had worked with each other, and an indication at which schools individual and/or combined interviews took place.

International School	Co-principal Identification	Years working together	Individual interviews	Combined interview
1	CP1C	6	✓	
1	CP1F	6		
2	CP2C	2	✓	✓
2	CP2F	2		
3	CP3C*	2	✓	✓
3	CP3F	2		
4	CP4C	6	✓	✓
4	CP4F	6		
5	CP5C	3	✓	
5	CP5F	3		
6	CP6C*	4	✓	
6	CP6F	4		
7	CP7C	2	✓	
7	CP7F	2		
8	CP8C	7	✓	
8	CP8F	7		
9	CP9C	4	✓	
9	CP9F	4		
10	CP10C	2	✓	
10	CP10F	2		

Table 2: Co-principal identification system

Key for co-principal identification: “CP” - co-principal; “8” - international school #8; “C” – Chinese, “F” – foreign co-principal
 * same individual - one Chinese co-principal spent time at both campuses, working with two different foreign co-principals

As an example, the Chinese co-principal working at international school campus #5 was referred to in this and subsequent chapters as “CP5C” i.e. ‘Co-principal international school #5 - Chinese. The international school type (i.e. “Type A”, “Type C”) was not indicated in the table for reasons related to maintaining the anonymity of participants (see Section 3.7.5).

Apart from co-principal CP2C, all other Chinese co-principals had a level of English ability proficient enough to allow for lengthy and robust conversations during the interviews. Due to CP2C’s lower level of English proficiency, a translator was used during the interview. The translator’s translation was reviewed later by a Chinese colleague proficient in English to amend the translation where required, and this corrected translation was reflected in the interview transcript used for the thematic analysis.

3.6.2.3 Semi-structured/unstructured interviews and interview protocol

The initial plan for the interview phase was to first conduct *individual* interviews of the dual-culture co-principals at each international school, using semi-structured interviews, in order to identify several significant incidents that were still memorable to them and to learn what the co-principals considered was their international school’s primary task. Semi-structured interviews provide the same key questions to interviewees, but there is flexibility in how they are asked and what follow-up or probing questions are asked; they are also useful for exploring the views of a person towards something (Van Teijlingen, 2014). Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to delve into situations more deeply (Seidman, 2013) in order to illuminate similarities and differences (Lenarduzzi, 2015).

The protocol for these *individual* co-principal interviews was established as follows:

- The co-principal was asked to share about the scope of their role and their job responsibilities - I used the term ‘job description’ when asking for this feedback.
- The co-principal was asked to share what they considered was the primary task of their school. *E.g. “If you could describe one reason for your school’s existence, what would it be? What would be the one reason your school existed for? In other words, what is your school here to do?”*
- The co-principal was asked to reflect and share about one to three incidents that they considered significant enough such that the incident required both co-principals to come together to discuss and eventually make a decision on. *E.g. “If you reflect back on the time you worked with _____, can you think of a situation or an issue, perhaps something challenging/tough, where you and _____ needed to come together to*

discuss it...to work together to solve it....to make a decision on it? There isn't a need for details at this time - I would simply like to note the situation/issue."

The co-principals were then to be invited to come together in a *combined* interview to recollect, share, and discuss those incidents identified during the individual interviews that had matched, using unstructured (open-ended) interviews. An 'active interviewing' style (Gubrium & Holstein, 2003; Holstein & Gubrium, 2004) was adopted for this 'critical incident' stage; from time to time, I would ask questions of co-principals to elicit how they made sense of the incidents, how they interacted with each other, what factors impacted on their discussions and decisions, and finally, how they came to make decisions on the incidents. During these interviews, I would also bear in mind a need to understand the co-principal's values, norms, and interpretive and decision-making processes. The interviews were intended to be, as Burgess (1988) states, 'conversations with a purpose', involving the construction and reconstruction of knowledge more than the excavation of it (Mason, 2002).

For several reasons, my interview protocol experienced changes during the interviewing phase. These changes related to interview frustrations I experienced due to my own interviewing ability as well as time constraints of the co-principals and will be explained further in Section 3.6.3 - "Trial interview" and in Chapter 4 - "Data collection, analysis and results". Interviews of individual co-principals occurred at all ten international schools, while combined interviews only occurred at three of the schools.

An electronic recorder was used to record all interviews, and notes were taken to help remember incidents discussed and to note any items of special interest that I was interested in following up with. All interviews were transcribed and reviewed with recordings to ensure accuracy.

3.6.2.4 Thematic analysis

The transcribed interviews were analyzed using a 'thematic analysis' process (Chapman et al, 2015; Hahn, 2008). Using this method, an emphasis was placed on the *content* of a text, of 'what' is said more than 'how' it is said (Riessman, 2011). I attempted to first identify text segments in the transcripts that related to my research questions. These text segments, either paraphrased (i.e. short statements that capture the meaning of a phrase) or verbatim ('in vivo') segments, were classified as Level 1 (*open*) codes. In the first analysis stage of the thematic analysis method, the researcher 'immerses' herself/himself in the raw data through the reading and re-reading of interview transcripts, cross-referencing, and making notes of ideas (Riessman, 2011). While concurrently analyzing/coding transcripts and reviewing existing Level 1 codes, I merged similar Level 1 codes to create Level 2 codes (*categories*), or 'nodes'. 'Similar' in

this context meant that they were deemed to relate to each other (Sarantakos, 2012). In the final stage, I attempted to identify if any ‘themes’ emerged from the analysis and merging of related Level 2 codes (Chapman et al, 2015).

As a qualitative method, thematic analysis employs: a) an inductive approach, whereby themes emerge from the data and are not pre-constructed by the researcher, and b) data collection and analysis occur concurrently (Silverman, 2015). Guest et al (2012) describe four basic steps in undertaking a thematic analysis:

1. Familiarization with, and organization of, transcripts;
2. Identification of possible themes;
3. Review and analysis of themes to identify structures;
4. Construction of a theoretical model, constantly checking against new data.

Finally, I took an ‘exploratory’ rather than a ‘confirmatory’ approach to the analysis. Guest et al (ibid) explain that in an exploratory approach, the researcher carefully reads and rereads the data, looking for key words, trends, themes, or ideas in the data that will help outline the analysis, before any analysis takes place, as opposed to a confirmatory, hypothesis-driven study, which is guided by specific ideas or hypotheses the researcher wants to assess. In summary, specific codes and analytic categories were not predetermined - they were derived from the data.

The analysis of the interview transcripts was conducted using the Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) NVivo.

3.6.3 Trial interview

The co-principals for this interview had been working together for about one year, four months, and jointly led and managed a Primary school campus. The format for the interview followed the format outlined in Section 3.6.2.3 - “Semi-structured/unstructured interviews and interview protocol”. The trial interview proceeded with brief interviews of each co-principal individually in order to determine their personal perspective on their school’s primary task and to identify several incidents that could be potentially discussed during the combined co-principal interview phase. A combined interview then followed, where the co-principals were asked to expand on significant incidents that matched.

Each principal could only think of two incidents that were significant enough to warrant further discussion - the two incidents shared by the individual co-principals were identical. During the

longer, combined interview, the co-principals shared that they get along with each other very well and never disagreed with each other, adding that their personalities were very similar. Regarding the two incidents, the principals shared that they agreed with each other about 'next steps' and on the final decisions but could not recall how their discussions transpired. Throughout the interview, the co-principals often added to each other's comments in apparent support of their partner's feedback.

This interview was a frustrating one for several reasons: my inability to draw out from the two co-principals their interpretive and sense-making processes, the co-principals' inability to think of the details of their conversations around both incidents, and their continual support of each other's comments rather than expressing their individual perspectives. Regretfully, I did not assert myself more as an interviewer during the combined interview in order to draw out from the co-principals their individual perspectives, choosing rather to let the co-principals talk and share.

Towards the end of the interview, the co-principals shared that I may have had more success learning about individual co-principals' perspectives if the co-principals were interviewed for a longer period of time individually.

Thus, as a result of this trial interview, and upon reflection about my own perceived inability to draw out during the combined interview a deeper discussion of sense-making and decision-making feedback from the co-principals, I decided to conduct subsequent interviews with individual co-principals for a longer period of time, attempting to use the longer time to discuss with each co-principal alone any potential incidents-for-discussion more deeply. It was my hope that at least several significant incidents shared and discussed by individual co-principals in subsequent interview sessions would match such that they could be discussed during the combined, unstructured interview phases.

In this section, I have provided an overview of the design and methods used for this research enquiry, the design having been built on the philosophical underpinnings and research methodology provided in Sections 3.4 and 3.5 respectively. I have also described the outcome of the trial interview which served to inform the initial interview process and protocol used for the first interview.

In the next two sections, I describe the ethical considerations for this enquiry and a critique of the methodology and research design used.

3.7 Ethical considerations

3.7.1 Introduction

The research for this enquiry was conducted in compliance with the guidelines stated in the British Educational Research Association's "Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research" (BERA, 2011), with careful attention made to: voluntary informed consent, openness and disclosure, the right to withdraw, not seeking to do any harm, privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality.

I did not foresee my research causing any harm to the participants (co-principals), to the international schools involved, or to myself.

3.7.2 Institutional authorization

Letters seeking permission to conduct my research enquiry were emailed to the directors at each of the two international school networks. A sample of the letter has been provided in Appendix 1. Permission to conduct research was granted by both institutions, with scanned copies of the signed letter attached to their replies. A list of names and email addresses of co-principals was provided to me by one network; I already had access to names and email addresses for the co-principals working in my own international school network.

3.7.3 Permission from and communication with participants

Emails were sent to all twenty-two co-principals seeking their permission to be interviewed. In each email, I attached a copy of the signed 'permission to conduct research' letter. A sample of the email has been provided in Appendix 2. In all cases, the co-principals replied expressing their willingness to be interviewed. I then proceeded to arrange interview times over the proceeding months.

3.7.4 Collection and organization of data

Interviews

At the beginning of each individual interview:

- I described the importance of and my commitment to maintaining anonymity and confidentiality with respect to the content of the interview.
- I sought permission from each co-principal to record the interview.

- I invited each participant to discuss only those incidents that they were comfortable discussing.

Interviews of the co-principals were recorded using an electronic recorder, and field notes were taken during and after each interview. Interviews were transcribed verbatim using guidance based on Gumperz and Berenz (1991) and Langford (1994), and interview recordings were transferred from the recorder to my laptop computer and stored throughout the data collection stage in a designated sub-folder within a folder prepared specifically for my research enquiry. The laptop was password-protected.

Field notes

Field notes were kept in a journal reserved specifically for my research enquiry. The journal was kept in a locked drawer at my home.

Transcripts

All interview transcripts, data analysis files and notes made during conferences with my supervisor were stored in designated sub-folders within a folder prepared specifically for my research enquiry on my laptop; the laptop was password-protected.

3.7.5 Anonymity

While the names of the international school networks and participants were kept confidential, a potential challenge still existed with respect to the anonymity of the international schools (and thus the participants): there were relatively few international schools in China that operated using a co-principalship leadership model at the time of this enquiry. Thus, I needed to bear this in mind when not only identifying the co-principal participants in this paper, but also the contexts and the actual incidents discussed i.e. I was not able to describe incidents discussed with details such that the reader of this paper would be able to discern on which international school campus the incident took place. For identification purposes throughout my analysis as well as the discussion and conclusion chapters, I adopted a coding system that helped to provide anonymity for all participants (see Section 3.6.2.2 – “Selection of participants”).

Finally, due to the limited scope of this enquiry, I was also not able to include descriptions or details of the co-principals’ campuses e.g. specific enrolment, location.

3.7.6 Deletion of data

All raw data (recorder, laptop folders) were deleted after the final approval of this thesis from the Doctoral College at the University of Bath.

3.8 Critique of methodology and research design

Constructivist, interpretivist nature of the enquiry

Subjectivity and selectivity were potential issues in this enquiry. The constructivist and interpretivist nature of this enquiry (see Section 3.4) related to my efforts at encouraging the co-principals to re-live and share their subjective experiences; in turn, my own subjectivity may have had an impact on the information I received through my senses, the information I considered as important, and the data that I chose to analyze. Palaiologou et al (2015) suggests that “being objective requires and immediate awareness of the subjectivity of our own minds” (p 33) and adds that “in social sciences, the researcher's self-function as instrument for research must be recognized first and foremost” (p 34). I interpreted the data I gathered from the co-principals, and these interpretations were shaped by my own experiences and background. In qualitative research, the subjectivity of the researcher intimately manifests itself in the research process - the researcher has a human personality that has many years of conditioning behind it (Yin, 2015).

As suggested in Section 3.4.3, and extending Emerson’s (2001) point about selectivity, the co-principals I interviewed for this enquiry selected the particular events which were significant in their minds to discuss, and I then made decisions about which events to focus on, both during the interviews and during the analysis stage. Thus, the incidents selected for discussion during the interviews were dependent on both the individual co-principals and the interviewer.

Assessing co-principals’ values was also a potential issue, as Savva (2015) notes that the “analysis of values is complex because even when motives are similar, underlying values are not necessarily so” (p 18). Finally, I note also that interpretivists are confronted with the problems of reliability and generalizability (Palaiologou et al, 2015) – the results from this enquiry should be applied to other co-principalships and contexts *cautiously*.

Personal characteristics of participants

Gaining an authentic understanding of the co-principals’ sense-making and decision-making processes was not without potential challenges, as the co-principals’ interpretation of school matters may have relied on a variety of personal characteristics such as gender (Court, 2003a;

Dass, 1995), age, societal culture, intercultural competency, previous experience, language, and other factors. The impact of the personalities of the co-principals on their working relationship, for example, has been addressed by a range of co-principalship researchers (Chirichello, 2003; Eckman, 2007; Gronn & Hamilton, 2004; Grubb & Flessa, 2006; Helfand, 2003b; Shockley & Smith, 1981).

Language

Challenges related to language and culture may have been an issue. As English was the language used for the interviews, the ability of the Chinese co-principal in each pair to understand the interview questions and to be able to engage in deep conversations with myself and the foreign co-principal may have led to inaccuracies in understanding. I needed to assess in advance of each interview, depending on the English ability of the Chinese co-principal, whether or not a translator should have been used for the interview sessions. Even with a perfectly capable translator, there may still have been issues with respect to accurate understandings. The cultural aspects of language and my own cultural and background biases when conducting the interviews and when analyzing and interpreting the data needed to be considered.

Organizational culture

It was possible that the organizational culture of the schools may have had an impact on how co-principals interpreted school matters and made decisions (Hallinger, 2003b) – there was a need to consider this in the analysis of the interviews as well, as the unit of analysis for this enquiry was limited to the co-principal team at each school.

Time and accuracy

Assuming that each co-principal went through reflective and interpretive/sense-making processes throughout the time surrounding each incident, and since these incidents may have occurred at a considerable period of time before the interviews, the co-principals may have changed/refined their perspectives, understandings and memories of the incidents over time. Moreover, changes/refinements to their interpretations/meanings may have resulted *during* the interview as they attempted to recollect and re-live the incidents.

Grounded theory

One of the major re-conceptualizations within grounded theory methodology since Glaser and Strauss' (1967) original work relates to the 'emergence' versus 'forcing' of data (Kelle, 2005; Kendall, 1999). It was my intention to both build a theoretical framework (e.g. international

schools, institutional theory, co-principalships, etc) from which to undertake this research and yet still attempt to allow concepts and themes to ‘emerge’ from the data. As described by Yin (2015), my methodology was unlike phenomenological studies that resist "any use of concepts, categories, taxonomies, or reflections about the experiences" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 9), and I did not avoid the construction of "a predetermined set of fixed procedures, techniques, and concepts that would rule-govern the research project" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 29).

Critical incident method

Several limitations of the critical incident method should be noted. For example, the technique relies on the ability of participants to remember all of an incident’s salient issues and to provide a detailed account of an event (Sharoff, 2008), and the categorization process for critical incident data analysis is painstaking and time consuming (Hughes et al, 2007). The technique’s reliability as a method is sometimes challenged with regard to both the limited generalizability of the findings and subjectivity of analysis as well as the selectivity or lack of accuracy of critical incident data due to its personal recall nature (Chell, 2004; Kain, 1997). Finally, as this method is based on incidents that occurred in the past, I did not learn about the co-principals’ current, daily sense-making and decision-making processes - thus, the data may not have been representative of their current sense-making and decision-making processes.

Thematic analysis

A key criticism of thematic analysis is that a truly inductive analysis using it is not possible and is always limited by the unconscious application of prior knowledge to the thematic analysis process - either from the researcher’s own experience or from their reading of the literature (Elliott & Jordan, 2010). Chapman (2015) states that pre-existing theories and knowledge can therefore over-influence interview outlines resulting in topics that ‘generate’ themes rather than letting them emerge, or can affect the choice of themes being formulated from codes. So, while Riessman (2011) claims that the “thematic approach is useful for theorizing across a number of cases - finding common thematic elements across research participants and the events they report”, readers must assume that when many narratives are grouped into a similar thematic category, everything in the thematic category means the same thing. Chapman (ibid) suggests that thematic analysts attempt to avoid overlaying their own professional judgments and viewpoints on to those of the participants.

3.9 Summary

In Chapter 3, I have provided the philosophical, methodological and research design foundations for the data collection, analysis and discussion stages of this enquiry. The

following chapter will describe my data collection and thematic analysis journey as well as the results of the thematic analysis.

Chapter 4 - Data collection, analysis and results

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present the results of the thematic analysis of interview data guided by the grounded theory method described by Charmaz (2006) and Corbin and Strauss (2007). The thematic analysis occurred in three stages: after interviews at the first two schools; after interviews at Schools 3 through 7; and after interviews at schools 8 through 10. My decisions regarding *when* to stop and code/analyze the interview data related to the timing of the interviews – there were relatively longer periods of time between the arranged interview dates for Schools 2 and 3 and for Schools 7 and 8 - these gaps afforded more time to code and analyze the data.

Rather than present the results of my thematic analysis after the coding and analysis of all the interview data, I have elected to describe in this chapter a summary of my coding and analysis efforts at the end of each stage in order to provide the reader with some of the thoughts and decisions I made along the way. Presented in this manner, it is my hope that the fluidity of my grounded theory journey can be experienced by the reader.

During the individual co-principal interviews, each participant was asked to share what they believed was their international school's *primary task* (see Section 2.10 – “Institutional theory” and Section 3.6.2.3 – “Semi-structured/unstructured interviews and interview protocol”). A summary of their responses has been provided in Section 4.6 and an analysis of these responses is presented in the Discussion chapter, Section 5.5.

I now present the results from the first thematic analysis stage, offering brief notes on the interviews conducted at the first two schools, describing the categories that emerged, and providing a few thoughts as I prepared for the subsequent set of interviews in the second stage.

4.2 Thematic analysis results (Level 1 and 2 coding) after two interviews

Due to time constraints, the Chinese co-principal at the first school visited was unable to come together for the combined interview after the two individual co-principal interviews; individual and combined interviews were conducted at the second school. Coding of transcripts of interviews from the first two schools resulted in 170 Level 1 (*open*) codes and nine (9) Level 2 codes (*categories*) emerging from the thematic analysis (see Hahn, 2008). I attempted to remain rather ‘soft’ with these emerged categories, leaving the possibility for changes to them over subsequent interviews. These initial and ‘soft’ categories are presented in this section not in any particular order nor in any rank of importance.

Sensitivity to the co-principal partner - the degree of closeness (A)

This category related to the degree of closeness or intimacy in the co-principals' relationship and their sensitivity to each other's demeanour.

Co-principal CP1F appreciated the intimacy of their relationship - she communicated that she and her partner knew the other person so well that they could anticipate their emotions and thoughts.

Both CP1F and CP1C commented that they enjoyed an excellent partnership, but CP1F shared that their first year together was challenging (for a variety of reasons). That challenging first year, though, created the path forward to developing their intimate relationship. They made efforts to know each other very well and to 'step into the other's shoes' in order to understand the other's perspective(s) on matters as they arose.

While CP2F reported that he enjoyed a good relationship with CP2C, their working relationship was not an intimate one. Language may have been an issue, though, as CP2C was unable to speak English - the co-principals required the use of an administrative staff member to provide translation during their meetings.

Development of personal strategies (B)

This category related to the co-principals' personal efforts at developing strategies which helped to affect a positive outcome in decision-making discussions with their partner.

Foreign co-principals CP1F and CP2F both shared that over the course of their time working with their partner, they developed some strategies that helped them to be more successful in broaching topics that needed important decisions. CP1F shared that, for example, if CP1C did not initially agree with the direction that CP1F wished to take on a particular matter, he learned in such cases to temporarily leave the topic of discussion and "*bring it back in small pieces.*" CP2F, sensitive to CP2C's moods, would wait for CP2C's mood to improve before broaching a particular important subject for discussion.

Development of sense-making and decision-making practices (C)

This category related to the shared development of decision-making practices by co-principals that aided their decision-making processes.

CP1F stated that she and CP1C made a commitment to each other that they discuss important issues only after lower level management teams have discussed the matter and provided input

to them first. CP2F commented that he and his partner agreed early on in their co-principalship what aspects of their school they worked on together, and which ones they didn't.

The Chinese co-principal is the principal in authority (D)

This category was developed due to comments made by the two foreign co-principals during the first two interviews and relates to perceived power imbalances in their relationship.

Both CP1F and CP2F expressed that the Chinese co-principal was the principal with the 'real' authority on their campuses. CP1F indicated that their relationship improved when she acknowledged the authority of the Chinese co-principal, and CP2F shared that early in their relationship he communicated to his partner, "*I know you're the real principal [on this campus].*"

Decision-making impacted by perceived cultural differences (E)

This category related to comments from co-principals regarding perceived cultural differences (i.e. 'culture' here is expressed as an 'external reality') and their possible impact on the interpretative, sense-making and decision-making processes during their discussions of significant issues.

The co-principals shared that there were differences in opinions about how to manage some challenging school issues, and it appears that some of these issues were not easily resolved. In their explanations of these incidents, CP1F, CP1C, and CP2F attributed their differences in perspectives to 'culture' and cultural differences. Some of these issues related to the induction of new teachers, the management of a difficult teacher, and a student behaviour situation. Differences in how issues should be managed and differences in how issues were viewed were shared during the interviews. Co-principals shared that while they eventually made decisions on the incidents discussed during the interviews, much discussion was sometimes required leading up to their decisions due to cultural differences.

Impact of personalities on the co-principalship relationship (F)

This category related to the personality of each co-principal and how the personality of the co-principals influenced both their ability to not only adjust to this type of leadership model (i.e. a shared leadership model) but to operate successfully within their school community and context (i.e. China).

"*Don't take it personally*" and "*leave your ego out of it*" were learned maxims that came up a few times during the first interview. CP2F shared that co-principals should not insist on 'having

it their way' and that one should leave their ego out of the decision-making process. The compatibility of the co-principals, CP2F shared, played a part in her and her partner's relationship.

Lack of provision of guidance or training for co-principals (G)

This category related to the co-principals' comments regarding a lack of provision of guidance/training for a co-principal, and in particular, the dual-culture co-principal role.

CP2C shared her frustration about the lack of guidance for co-principals on how to be effective co-principals. CP1F would have appreciated some direction from the organization about how organizational decisions were made and something about the context within which they were expected to lead and manage.

The 'right person' for the job (H)

This category may have been related to Category F ("Impact of personalities on co-principalship relationship"). A suggestion was made by one of the Chinese co-principals in the first two interviews that, to be successful in a co-principal role, you needed to have certain personal characteristics.

CP1C stated that you have to be "*the right person*" for the job of co-principal and explained that this meant, for example, you needed to be able to make decisions with someone else rather than only by yourself (I.e. as a solo principal). She added that not everyone is capable of being a co-principal - it related to characteristics like adaptability and flexibility.

A co-principal may need to unlearn in order to learn (I)

This category related to the possible need for principals to forget prior learning and learn new skills in order to succeed in a co-principalship.

There were several times during one interview where CP1F shared that, in order to make the partnership work, she needed to "*let go*" and "*unlearn*" everything she had learned from her previous role as a principal in her home country, with respect to curriculum, decision-making, and "*the way that things are done*".

Thoughts and reflections going into the second stage

The decision to spend a longer time with each individual co-principal (a decision I had made after the trial interview) was a good one. Despite not being able to conduct a combined interview at the first school, interviews at both schools resulted in lengthy conversations around

significant incidents and yielded sufficient data to analyze. At this point in time, I was fully prepared and ready to modify the nine (9) categories that had emerged from my analysis of the interviews at the first two schools, keeping an ‘open mind’ with them as I headed into the second set of interviews (at Schools 3 to 7).

In the next section I present the results from the second thematic analysis stage, describing new categories that emerged, modifications to existing categories, and some thoughts as I prepared for the final set of interviews in the third stage.

4.3 Thematic analysis results (Level 1 and 2 coding) after seven interviews

The coding and thematic analysis of interview transcripts for this second stage commenced after conducting interviews at the next five international schools (i.e. Schools 3 to 7). Individual and combined interviews were conducted at Schools 3 and 4, but due to i) time constraints of the co-principals and ii) my inability as an interviewer to draw out from the co-principals a deeper understanding of significant incidents during *combined* interviews (experienced particularly at the 3rd school), I decided to continue interviews from the fifth school on with individual co-principals only.

Initial coding of all interviews conducted at Schools 1 to 7 resulted in a total of 526 Level 1 (*open*) codes and 24 Level 2 codes (*categories*). In addition to revising previous categories that had emerged from interviews at the first two schools visited (see Section 4.2), several new categories emerged from a thematic analysis of the subsequent five interview sessions. The revised categories (A to I) and new categories (J to X) are described below. Once again, these initial and ‘soft’ categories are presented here not in any particular order nor rank of importance.

Sensitivity to the co-principal partner - the degree of closeness (A)

One additional co-principal, CP4F, mentioned the high degree of closeness in their co-principal relationship. CP4F could describe things that bothered his partner as well as characteristics of his partner which, because he was sensitive to them, helped their working relationship. It should be noted that CP4F and CP4C had been working together in their co-principalship for six years.

Development of personal strategies (B)

Only one other co-principal described a personal strategy when attempting to work out a solution to a challenging situation with his partner.

CP7F, referring to his partner, shared that he “*knows how she responds*”, “*knows things that she’s quite definite on...and...areas that she was delicate with.*” Thus, having approached his partner to discuss a matter and noticing that she was hesitant to talk about it, he would say to himself, “*That strategy didn’t work, I’m gonna come at it at a different angle*”, and then put the issue “*back on the table a bit like a terrier.*”

Development of sense-making and decision-making practices (C)

This category appeared to be developing into a major category, with many co-principals sharing that putting certain practices into place helped to make their co-principalship work more effectively with respect to sense-making and decision-making, as well as the communication of decisions. Thus far, co-principals described practices related to: which members of staff should be involved in the decision-making process (CP2F, CP6F), the division of responsibilities (CP1F, CP3F), what kinds of issues required both co-principals to be involved in a decision (CP3F, CP4F, CP5F, CP6C, CP6F), if and when an issue should come to the co-principals for a decision (CP6F), keeping each other informed of important matters or discussions (CP2F, CP3F, CP4C), when a decision should be communicated (CP3F), how a decision was to be communicated (CP3C, CP3F), which co-principal should meet with a particular parent (CP3F, CP3C, CP6F), if a translator would be required in a meeting with a parent (CP6F), which co-principal would take a more prominent role if both co-principals were to meet with a parent (CP7C), the strategies to be used during decision-making discussions e.g. ‘taking a devil’s advocate’ position (CP6F), and establishing shared priorities and values when working through their decision-making processes (CP1F, CP2C, CP2F, CP3C, CP3F, CP4F, CP5C, CP5F, CP6C, CP6F, CP7C).

The Chinese co-principal is the principal in authority (D)

Apart from CP1F and CP2F, no additional co-principals shared comments related to the authority structures within their co-principalship. Co-principals at Schools 3 through 7 communicated that they enjoyed a very equal standing with their partner.

Decision-making impacted by perceived cultural differences (E)

This category was also turning out to be a major category, with many co-principals sharing of perceived cultural differences amongst themselves or within the school community that may have impacted their sense-making and decision-making processes. Thus far, co-principals described cultural differences related to: what type of challenging matters each co-principal should deal with (CP1F), what types of incidents were more serious than others (CP1F), how teachers should be managed (CP2F), the strategy to be used for solving an incident (CP6C), the

degree of directness of a co-principal when discussing challenging matters with their co-principal partner (CP4C, CP4F, CP5F, CP7F), how decisions would be received by the community i.e. teachers, parents (CP4F, CP5F), which strategies were to be used when meeting with parents (CP4F), and why things were ‘done a certain way’ (CP2F).

Impact of personalities on the co-principal relationship (F)

This category was expanded to include not only comments on how the personalities of the co-principals influenced their ability to work in a co-leadership role, in their school community and in their context (i.e. China), but also comments related to the possible influence of co-principals’ personalities on their ability to come together to make sense of things and to make decisions. Thus far, co-principals shared about the impact of co-principals’ personalities on: the co-principal’s ego (CP2F), the degree of personal attachment to a decision (CP2F, CP5F), the ability and/or desire to look at issues from the other’s perspective (CP1F, CP6C), the adaptability of the co-principal partner to the China context (CP2C), the degree of an ‘easygoing’ nature of the co-principal partner (CP4F, CP5F), the compatibility of the co-principals (CP2F), the frame of mind (or mood) of a co-principal partner (CP2F), the ability of the foreign co-principal to adjust to the dual-culture co-principal role (CP4F), the degree to which a co-principal holds on to certain principles (CP4C), and the thinking/feeling nature of the co-principal partner (CP4F). Several co-principals shared their general perception that personality impacts on the co-principals’ working relationship (CP5C, CP5F, CP6F, CP6C), and two more co-principals emphasized the importance of not taking things personally when discussing a challenging issue (CP4C, CP5F).

Lack of provision of guidance or training (G)

In addition to the comments from CP1C, CP1F and CP2F about the need for guidance and/or training for co-principals with respect to how to work effectively in a dual-culture co-principal capacity, CP6F shared that some policy documents provided by his institution have helped him with his decision-making processes.

It was during this phase of the interview schedule that I decided to follow up with all the co-principals by seeking feedback on a few questions using Survey Monkey. One question related to seeking feedback from co-principals regarding the provision (or lack) of an induction programme and/or training for the co-principals by their school. The Survey Monkey questions and results can be found in Appendix 3; a discussion of the results will be provided in the Discussion chapter, Chapter 5.

The 'right person' for the job (H)

Comments beyond those made by CP2C have resulted in a slight expansion of this category. Co-principals shared that, in order to operate successfully in a co-principal role, the principal needed to be able to: make decisions with someone else rather than only by him/herself as a solo principal (CP2C, CP4F), be adaptable and flexible (CP2C), and have cultural adaptability (CP7C).

A co-principal may need to unlearn in order to learn (I)

Although there were no new contributions to this category, I continued to keep it open should any of the remaining co-principals share related comments.

Business manager supports the co-principals (J)

This category related to the existence in some of the international schools visited of a 'business manager' (or 'general manager'), a member of staff at the same organizational level as (on equal standing with) the co-principals. The business manager, a Chinese citizen, worked closely in these schools with the co-principals to the extent that decisions (mostly non-academically related, but sometimes academically related) were often made with the co-principals and business manager together - in these schools, the co-principals and business manager formed the 'senior leadership team'. As many issues in the school meant that operational matters and academic matters overlapped, the business manager was encouraged to be familiar with the academic programme in these schools. Based on comments from co-principals in these schools, the business manager would be the person who would: work with local government officials; manage legal matters (by working with school lawyers); and liaise with community representatives.

Although I had learned during this second analysis stage of the existence of this 'senior leadership team' at these international schools and of the sense-making and decision-making processes that occurred through this team, I chose *not* to expand the research unit for my enquiry to include the 'business manager' at these schools, opting to stick to my original plan of learning about the co-principals' sense-making and decision-making processes through interviews of the co-principal teams only.

Chinese co-principal more often manages the challenges presented by Chinese and Asian parents (K)

In discussing incidents with co-principals in seven international schools thus far, this category was created to group feedback from co-principals related to the sometimes larger role of the

Chinese co-principal in resolving some incidents. From the discussions of incidents, it appeared in these cases that language, norms and culture were factors.

Foreign and Chinese co-principals interviewed shared that the Chinese co-principal was the principal more often to meet and resolve issues with Chinese and Asian parents (CP2F, CP3F, CP3C, CP4C, CP4F, CP5F, CP7F, CP7C) and with Chinese teachers (CP3F, CP4C, CP5F, CP6F). Please see a variety of related quotes from co-principals in Appendix 4.

Chinese teachers and parents interact with co-principals differently (L)

This category was created to group comments from co-principals that suggested teachers and parents at times interacted differently with the Chinese and foreign co-principals.

The reasons provided thus far were: foreign teachers were at times more comfortable interacting with the foreign co-principal (CP3C, CP3F, CP6F), Chinese teachers were at times more comfortable interacting with the Chinese co-principal (CP3C, CP6F), Chinese parents communicated different meanings to the two co-principals on a given matter (CP4C), and if meeting with co-principals separately, some Chinese parents employed different meeting strategies (e.g. emotions, tone, pressure, language used) (CP4C).

Decision-making processes sometimes include others (M)

This category related to comments from co-principals in which they shared that groups and other individuals in their school community were involved in their decision-making processes through their interactions with them.

According to these co-principals, the following members of staff had at times been involved in decision-making processes for significant incidents: the ‘business manager’ (co-principals at schools 3 to 7), vice-principals (CP5F, CP6F, CP7C), middle managers (CP2F, CP4F, CP5F), and teachers (CP2F, CP4F, CP6C).

CP6C stated, “*We don't make decisions, we... we put [the matter] to the campus leadership team and we ratify [it].*”

Efficiency impacted by co-principalship (N)

This category, at this point not a significant one, related to the possible impact of a dual-culture co-principalship leadership model on the efficiency of their decision-making.

One co-principal shared that it was simply not possible for both co-principals to always come together to make decisions on things. For this reason, another co-principal shared that it was

helpful to have an agreement between the two co-principals on a ‘division of labour’. A third co-principal shared, *“In some cases, we're together, but it wouldn't be a smart use of our time if we did everything together and so we've kind of divvied up responsibilities.”*

Impact of the principal’s experience on the co-principalship (O)

This category related to the possible impact of experience on the ability of the co-principals to come together to make decisions on things in the context of an international school in China.

Thus far, the following co-principals mentioned that a lack of relevant prior experience had an impact on a co-principal’s ability to operate successfully in the dual-culture co-principal role: CP1F, CP4F, CP5C, CP5F, CP6C.

The lack of experience shared by these co-principals related to: knowledge of international education (CP1F), a previous exposure to cultural differences and the ambiguity in meanings one may face in a different cultural context (CP4F), being new to a leadership and management role (CP5F), managing a difficult meeting with a parent (CP5C), managing a challenging issue with a teacher (CP6C), and being ‘new’ to a dual-culture co-principal role and not knowing how best to navigate through an issue with a partner (CP6C).

The foreign co-principal learned along the way (P)

This category was created to collect feedback from both Chinese and foreign co-principals about the learning experiences of the *foreign* co-principal since arriving in the context of their international school in China and a dual-culture co-principal role.

Co-principals shared that foreign co-principals had learned: to better interact with Asian parents i.e. language, culture (CP7C), to build relationships with the community (CP6F); to develop shared understandings (CP6F), to work towards ‘harmony’ and helping people feel valued (CP5F), how to differentiate communications with Chinese and foreign teachers (CP4F), to communicate (i.e. language used, signing off in an email) with the whole faculty i.e. as a group (CP4F), and to develop the skills and knowledge required for success in the China context (CP4F). Please see Appendix 4 for a related quote from CP4F.

Meanings and understandings (Q)

This category was created to gather comments by co-principals related to their attempts to make sense of matters (meanings and understandings) across a range of topics and issues: international education (CP1F), teacher capabilities (CP2F), suggestions on how to see other perspectives (CP2F, CP6F), the reason for having dual-culture co-principals e.g. helping

Chinese teachers understand international perspectives (CP5C), differences in understandings between Chinese and foreign faculty/staff (CP7C), and the need for ‘common sense’ (CP5C). Please see Appendix 4 for related quotations from several co-principals.

It's important to be 'on the same page' (R)

This category was created to group comments made by co-principals in which they used the phrase ‘*on the same page*.’ I interpreted the use of this phrase to mean ‘have a shared understanding’. Co-principals shared that they desired to be ‘on the same page’ with their partner: when making a decision and preparing to communicate it to parents (CP3C, CP4F); when preparing to communicate with the faculty (e.g. staff meetings, sending an email signed by both co-principals) (CP4F).

Planning and preparing for decisions and communications is important (S)

This category housed comments made by co-principals that spoke to the need for them to consider *how* to communicate a decision to some group in the school community (e.g. teachers, parents). Incidents for which the co-principals needed to consider how decisions should be communicated and how they would be received included those involving a teacher (CP6C, CP6F), a parent (CP4C, CP4F, CP5C), and a general communication to teachers (CP3F).

Relying on each other (T)

This category was created to group comments made by co-principals related to relying on each other’s strengths to make the tasks of leading and managing successful in their context and to improve their sense-making and decision-making processes.

Having someone to make sense of issues together with was one of many benefits of the co-principalship as reported by some participants. Additional comments from co-principals related to: seeing both sides of an issue (CP2C), being able to chat and share thinking (CP6F), having a partner who is Chinese and a female in meetings with Chinese/Asian parents (CP4F), being able to reflect, make notes and strategize in meetings with parents while the partner is talking (CP7F), and having someone at the same organizational level to confidentially ‘bounce ideas off of’ in the decision-making process (CP7F).

Other comments related to the benefit of having a partner when: dealing with Chinese parents i.e. language, culture (CP7C), managing Chinese and foreign faculty i.e. language, culture (CP7C), and working with kindergarten, Primary, or Secondary teams on curriculum matters i.e. curricular knowledge and experience (CP7C). Please see Appendix 4 for related quotations from several co-principals.

Taking time to work through the decision-making process (U)

This category related to comments made by co-principals in which they expressed the need for the co-principals to take time to work through the decision-making process.

Time, and sometimes considerable time, was needed to: have a shared understanding of the rationale for a decision (CP1F, CP2F), re-visit a sensitive topic again and again in order to convince the co-principal partner (CP1F, CP4C, CP7F), weigh the ‘pros and cons’ of a decision (CP3F), consider what school community stakeholders would be impacted by the decision (CP3C, CP7C), decide on the ‘language’ (i.e. anticipating the interpreted meaning of a communication) to be used when responding to a request from teachers (CP3F), incorporate discussions with others who needed to be involved in the decision-making process e.g. the ‘business manager’ (CP3F), and come up with a follow-up action plan (CP3C).

Time is needed for building the co-principal relationship (V)

This is a category, and a relatively extensive one, that was created to group comments made by co-principals who expressed the need for time to build the co-principal relationship.

Time was needed: to know each other e.g. personality, working style, the best way to approach the other person (CP2F, CP4F, CP6C, CP7F), to learn how to deal with conflict in the relationship (CP2F, CP6C), to build trust in each other (CP6C), to become more confident in the role (CP5F), to acculturate to the context i.e. international school and/or China (CP2F, CP4F, CP5C), to adjust to a co-leadership role (CP2C, CP2F, CP4F, CP6C), to learn about the educational regulations and laws of the country (CP1F, CP2C), to ‘read’ the other person (CP2F, CP4F), and to learn from their co-principal partner (CP4F, CP6F). CP5F stated that time was needed for the co-principals’ “*cultures to come together*”.

Values and opinions (W)

This category housed feedback from co-principals that suggested that values may have had an impact on the co-principals’ sense-making and decision-making processes.

Co-principals shared during interviews that they (the two co-principals) often had the same or similar values when making decisions on matters, for example, with respect to student safety (CP3C), how to communicate with a teacher, and appropriate teacher conduct (CP6F).

Apparent differences in the values and opinions of the co-principals were revealed through their sharing of the discussions they had when making decisions related to: acceptable student

behaviour, (CP1F), student use of technology (CP1F), if, when and how to dismiss a teacher (CP2F, CP4F, CP5F, CP6F), changes to curriculum (CP2F), and teacher punctuality (CP2F).

CP7C shared that, through their (the co-principals') discussions over a lengthy period of time on one challenging issue related to a teacher's managerial position, she learned a lot about her partner's values.

Cultural assumptions and generalizations (X)

This category was created to group comments made by co-principals related to perceived differences in perspectives between the co-principals themselves or amongst members of their school community, differences to which they attributed to culture.

The attribution of culture by the co-principals to different perspectives related to a variety of situations: student conduct e.g. student attire (CP1F), the use of technology (CP1F), teacher conduct (CP1F, CP3F, CP4C, CP4F, CP6C), the way of operating a school (CP2F), the method of communication by teachers to co-principals e.g. direct or indirect, individual or collective (CP3C, CP7C), the conduct of (a) parent(s) (CP3F), the way of thinking about a matter (CP4F), the way of dealing with conflict (CP4C), the need for being vocal in meetings (CP3C, CP5F, CP7C), and the degree to which one's work and life is mixed (CP4C). CP2F said that it was important to "*honour the culture that is here*" and to "*learn different approaches*". CP4C described differences between Chinese and foreign teacher groups with respect to the need at times to relax one's principles in order to achieve a certain goal.

CP7F stated that in meetings with Chinese or Asian non-English speaking parents, his Chinese co-principal partner would act as a "*cultural filter*", and CP6F shared his frustrations of not knowing what was being said or modified in meetings - he would often ask himself during the meetings, '*Were things being added or changed?*' CP7C shared that, if Chinese teachers were concerned about a matter, the teachers tended to remain quiet, a characteristic of the Chinese culture in that particular region of China. The co-principal added that the foreign teachers at their school perceived this 'silence' to mean that the Chinese teachers were "*incompetent*" or "*unengaged*". Please see Appendix 4 for related quotations from several co-principals.

Thoughts and reflections going into the third stage

Many, but not all, of the modified and new categories that resulted from the thematic analysis of interviews at Schools 3 to 7 began to reach a 'saturated' status during this stage i.e. while these 'saturated' categories continued to receive coding contributions as my analysis of interview data continued, gathering fresh data no longer 'sparked' new theoretical insights nor

revealed new properties for these categories (Charmaz, 2006). Some categories continued to remain relatively insignificant with respect to the quantity of Level 1 code contributions, receiving few (or in some cases, no) additional Level 1 codes. Despite the saturation of many categories, I continued to maintain an ‘open mind’ with respect to understanding the sense-making and decision-making processes of dual-culture co-principals as I headed into the final set of interviews at Schools 8 to 10, fully prepared to create new categories if needed.

In the next section I present the results from the third and final thematic analysis stage, again describing new categories that emerged and modifications to existing categories (if any). Axial coding also began during the third stage, resulting in the organization of categories into themes. These themes will be briefly described in the next section and discussed comprehensively in the Discussion chapter, Chapter 5.

4.4 Thematic analysis results (Level 1 and 2 coding) after all interviews; axial-coding

The coding and thematic analysis of interview transcripts for this third and final stage commenced after conducting interviews at the final three international schools (i.e. Schools 8 to 10). Interviews of individual co-principals only were conducted at these three schools for reasons described in Section 4.3. As a result of the thematic analysis of the final three interview sessions and a review of the categories that had emerged from the analysis of interviews at Schools 1 to 7, some of the existing categories (e.g. from A to X) were refined and updated to include new coding contributions. In addition, several new categories emerged. In total, the coding of all interviews resulted in 707 Level 1 (*open*) codes and 32 Level 2 codes (*categories*), comprised of existing categories A through X and new categories (Y to ZF).

After reviewing all the emerged categories, re-reading field notes, and reflecting on the three research questions, the 32 categories were organized into six main themes using an axial coding approach (Sarantakos, 2012). These themes resulted from grouping categories that were deemed to relate to each other as guided by the three research questions. In some cases, a category was merged with another category when I felt that the description and meaning of one category encompassed the other. Descriptions of the themes and the new categories (Y to ZF) are provided along with explanations of any mergers of categories – the themes are presented in this section not in any particular order or rank of importance. I would like to note here that the (imaginary) ‘lines’ between these tentative themes were ‘fuzzy’ - some themes overlapped, and several categories were placed in more than one of the themes. A discussion of the final themes can be found in the Discussion chapter, Chapter 5.

Theme: The principal and what s/he brings to the co-principalship

This theme pertains to the individual principal and what they bring to the co-principal relationship. It was very apparent that the sense-making and decision-making abilities and processes of the co-principals were influenced by different aspects of the individual.

Impact of personalities on the co-principal relationship (F)

Several new contributions were made to this already significant category, and category H (“The ‘right person’ for the job”) was merged into this category. I note here that while some authors may care to distinguish between the terms ‘personality’ and ‘character’, I will use the term ‘personality’ when describing some of the following comments and issues shared by co-principals through discussions of incidents.

Several co-principals from Schools 8 through 10 also stated that the personality of their partner had an impact on their co-principal relationship (CP8C, CP8F, CP10C, CP10F). CP10C shared that the challenges she and her partner experienced in their co-principalship related to personality differences - she added that her relationships with previous co-principal partners were more successful due to their personalities.

CP8C said that when considering an issue, her foreign partner would tend to think of the ‘big picture’ while she would think of the details, and she attributed this difference to personality differences.

Some of the adjectives used by co-principals when describing their partners were (opposites implied): patient, tolerant, accommodating, understanding (of culture or perspective), open-minded, bossy, humble, adaptable, sensitive, easygoing, views matters as ‘black’ or ‘white’, ‘thinking/logical’ vs ‘feeling’ type, blunt, and pushy.

Category H, “The ‘right person’ for the job”, was merged into this category since it contained statements by several co-principals (described in the previous section) that I interpreted as suggesting that the person taking on a dual-culture co-principal role needed to have the optimum set of personal characteristics if the dual-culture co-principal relationship were to be a successful (effective?) one in the context of an international school in China. Finally, CP10C shared that personality and cultural sensitivity were linked.

Impact of the principal's experience on the co-principalship (O)

Several more co-principals from Schools 8 through 10 discussed some aspect of previous experience having an impact on a co-principal's ability to operate successfully in the dual-culture co-principal role: CP9C, CP9F, CP10C.

CP6F shared that his Chinese co-principal partner, having worked previously with foreign co-principals, was able to more quickly adapt to a 'new' co-principalship relationship than he was, as he had come from working in solo principal/leadership roles in his home country. Spending time overseas had helped one Chinese co-principal work in a dual-culture co-principal relationship i.e. she had gained experience working with people from different cultures (CP10C). One Chinese co-principal commented that the different backgrounds and strengths of her previous and current partners matched the different needs of the school as it grew through its stages of development (CP9C).

CP9C noted that, even with much experience, there still needs to be a period of adjustment for the dual-culture co-principals to get used to their role and relationship, but CP9F shared that having previous experience working in a dual-culture co-principalship most certainly helps a principal adjust to a new dual-culture co-principal relationship.

Values and opinions (W)

Differences of opinion, I suggest, may be related to one's values and the norms that one has grown up with. More contributions were made to this category after interviews in Schools 8 through 10. After one particular and significant incident at one school, the co-principals agreed that the incident had "*crossed the line*" and was "*against our principles*", and thus the incident warranted immediate action because "*it was the right thing to do*" (CP8C).

CP8F shared that on one occasion, there was a difference of opinion between the co-principals about how to manage the communication to teachers of a decision on a significant issue. In the end, the co-principals agreed to have the Chinese co-principal communicate the decision to the Chinese teachers, and the foreign co-principal to the foreign teachers. This decision was not related to language, but cultural similarities. At a different campus, there was a strong difference of opinion between co-principals about the consequence for a student's action (CP10F).

Personal priorities and agendas (ZA)

This new, relatively small category was created to group comments from co-principals at two of the schools visited - the comments related to personal priorities and agendas. It was apparent

that, when discussing significant issues related to plans for student enrolment, curriculum, resources and the overall vision for their campus, the individual co-principals had different priorities and personal agendas for a given issue and attempted to advocate, sometimes strongly, for their priority or agenda to be realized.

Development of personal strategies (B)

No new contributions were made to this category.

The foreign co-principal learned along the way (P)

Only one more contribution was made to this category through interviews in Schools 8 through 10, and category I - “A co-principal may need to unlearn in order to learn”, was merged with this category due to the similarity of its grouped Level 1 codes.

CP9F shared that, since arriving in China and working in the context of his international school, he has learned *“just how deep cultural difference is. You know that whole thing that everybody throws up with the iceberg kind of metaphor or analogy and I... that's so true. And the iceberg's deeper, wider than... I knew it to be.”* He also learned that the “sense of community” at his international school was much stronger than he expected it would be, given the “fairly fluid population” of the expatriate community.

Lack of provision of guidance and training (G)

CP10C stated that the co-principal leadership model was a “*management structure that had been decided by the organization*”, so, as “*different principals have different styles...we just [have to] figure out [the] way how we get co-principals together.*” CP9C shared, “*we need, you know, [to] work out the model, [for] both of us [to be] comfortable and workable. So otherwise we will suffer from this [leadership] model.*”

Out of 20 co-principals who were sent the Survey Monkey survey referred to earlier (see Appendix 3), 18 participants responded. 15 of these co-principals replied that they had not received any training for or induction into the dual-culture co-principal role. The three remaining co-principals indicated that they had some form of informal induction from the school’s foreign superintendent.

Theme: The cultural - perceptions, assumptions, and differences

This theme relates to the cultural perceptions, assumptions and differences held by the co-principals and is the result of a merger of several large categories: X - “Cultural assumptions

and generalizations”, E - “Decision-making impacted by perceived cultural differences” and a new category, ZC - “Awareness of cultural and societal differences”. The cultural aspect of the co-principals’ sense-making and decision-making processes was very evident from discussions of incidents.

Towards the end of the analysis of all initial codes and categories, I had difficulty in distinguishing between the codes in these three categories, categories which were all related in some way to ‘culture’. Interviews in Schools 8 through 10 resulted in more coding contributions to these categories, and some initial codes from interviews in Schools 1 through 7 were also incorporated into this theme after reviewing other related but smaller categories.

Through a discussion of significant incidents on their campuses, co-principals shared about perceived differences in culture related to the use of iPads (CP1F) and what ‘proper’ teaching was (CP3C), and CP8C suggested that Chinese faculty had more difficulty separating their professional work from their emotions. CP8F stated that if you find yourself in a culture that is not your own, “*you should not assume that you know exactly what is going on*”, and CP9F shared that his Chinese co-principal better understood the “*cultural logic*” of their (Chinese/Asian) parent community than he did.

CP9C stated that sometimes there was a cultural barrier to her and her partner’s communications, and also shared that she could sense cultural differences when performing a variety of tasks with her partner e.g. crafting an email, deciding on the urgency of a matter, giving presentations, and also when openly discussing culture. One co-principal shared that, as she was educated in China but had spent time overseas, she was more “*integrated*” and more able than other Chinese co-principals to understand the cultural differences between the Chinese and foreign faculty on campus - she was therefore better situated (as compared with them) to solve issues in an international school context.

CP9F jokingly noted that there may be differences between Chinese and foreign staff with respect to compliance, and these differences were sometimes observed in the way the two co-principals reacted to situations involving the organization. CP9C stated that, while she does not like to attribute cultural differences in faculty and staff to either ‘Eastern’ and ‘Western’ cultures, some differences were related to culture, and all matters have some cultural aspect to them. She added that, compared with the cultural difference aspect of faculty and staff interactions, the “*human being part*” is larger and should be considered.

CP8C shared that she was perhaps more sensitive to “cultural things” than her foreign partner, and CP8F believed that he was more direct in communications and discussions than his Chinese

co-principal partner - this difference related to his belief that Chinese were less direct than foreigners, particularly those in his home country. This less direct and “more measured” approach from his partner, he added, often helped to diffuse difficult situations.

Theme: The cognitive aspect of dual-culture co-principalships

This theme relates to cognitive aspects of the dual-culture co-principals’ interpretive processes...aspects that seemed to play a role in their sense-making and decision-making processes to the extent that they appeared to have had an impact on the decisions that co-principals eventually made on matters.

Meanings and understandings (Q)

There were many more contributions to this category from interviews conducted at Schools 8 through 10, and a few contributions from other interviews were added after reviewing all Level 1 codes again.

Discussions of incidents revealed that meanings and understandings were important aspects of co-principals’ interactions, between both themselves and with faculty/staff, across a variety of situations. For example: due to linguistic challenges in their communications, some co-principals would use a translator to establish shared understandings and meanings (CP1F, CP6F); in some cases, co-principals had different interpretations about how a challenging meeting with parents transpired e.g. well versus poorly (CP8C); after a meeting, a group of parents conveyed a collective feeling to one co-principal that was different to one they shared with the other co-principal (CP8C).

One Chinese co-principal shared that she needed to be a ‘bridge’ between the different departments and teacher groups (Chinese, foreign) in their school with respect to interpreting and conveying meanings (CP8C). Other examples related to meanings and understandings included: a foreign co-principal often not knowing what his Chinese co-principal partner was saying to a parent during a meeting after his statements or points were translated (CP7F), differences of opinions of expectations for certain job positions (CP2F), co-principals preferring to convey important messages to teachers rather than have the business manager do it since they felt that they could better help teachers understand the message (CP9C), looking for a “common thread” or common goal when faced with having different perspectives on matters (CP9C, CP9F), needing to think about, discuss and agree on how to engage both Chinese and foreign teachers in a new major initiative on their campus (CP9C), and a foreign co-principal using a translator when meeting with his Chinese co-principal partner in order to understand why she had made a certain decision on a matter (CP2F).

It's important to be 'on the same page' (R)

One other co-principal in the final three schools visited also used the phrase, "*on the same page*". CP8C stated that one of the important reasons that she and her co-principal partner "*survived*" and were able to manage the school successfully was that they (the co-principals) were always 'on the same page'.

Taking time to work through the decision-making process (U)

Only one more contribution to this category was made from interviews in Schools 8 through 10, and an earlier initial code was added after reviewing all codes. In both cases, a co-principal shared that, after first discussing a significant issue with their partner, they then gave their partner more time to think about it before continuing the decision-making process (CP6C, CP7F).

Role ambiguity (Y)

A few co-principals described challenges with respect to their own or their partner's understanding of the dual-culture co-principal role, and how the ambiguity of their role led to challenges with respect to some aspects of their role.

CP10C stated that having a clear job description helped co-principals understand their role better. CP2F shared that, in the beginning, she had to "*figure out her place*" so as to improve the relationship with her partner, and one foreign co-principal experienced significant challenges in understanding his role in the beginning, but after some time and after getting to know his partner, his role became clearer and his relationship with his partner improved.

CP10F described situations where there was ambiguity about decision-making - there were times when one co-principal had made a decision on an important matter without consulting the partner. At the other extreme, CP9C shared that within their school there was not one "*pure area*" that could only be looked after by the Chinese co-principal or foreign co-principal or business manager. Finally, one co-principal shared that it was important for he and his partner to establish and agree on role boundaries (CP1F).

Theme: The co-principal relationship

The relationship of the co-principals appeared to have a bearing on their sense-making and decision-making processes. This theme is the result of grouping categories that related to aspects of their relationship that may have had an impact on these processes: trust, time, practices and the intimacy of the relationship.

Trust (Z)

The importance of trust in the co-principal relationship was conveyed by many co-principals (CP1F, CP2F, CP4F, CP7C, CP6C, CP8C, CP9F, CP10C). CP2F stated, *“Once you have trust, you can talk just about anything.”*

According to one co-principal, trust is the foundation for the co-principal relationship and needs to be built up first (CP10C). Trust is also important for solving problems and getting through challenges together (CP7C, CP8C), and maintaining an honest and open relationship (CP7C).

Trust was linked to a principal’s ability to adjust to a co-principal role having come from a solo principal role (CP6C) and takes time to build if a new co-principal is coming into the relationship (CP8C). The ease with which trust may be built depends on a person’s personality and how well you get to know the person (CP8C). Co-principals shared that trust can be built more quickly with some principals than others (CP6C); keeping each other informed helps to maintain trust (CP4F, CP8C). Sometimes a co-principal will need to trust their partner to make quick decisions without consulting them (CP8C) and being able to trust what message your co-principal partner conveys to colleagues on one’s behalf is important (CP4F).

Time is needed for building the co-principal relationship (V)

Through a discussion of incidents with co-principals in Schools 8 through 10, several co-principals commented on the need for time for their co-principal relationship to improve. The added coding contributions to this category have made ‘time’ an important ingredient with regards to factors that impact the ability of the co-principals to come together to make sense of matters and make decisions.

CP8C shared that it took time to get used to her partner’s personality, thinking, character, and to build trust; CP8F shared that the first year was difficult because of some misunderstandings, but after that time their relationship improved. CP9F stated that *“it was a gradual process of getting to know each other”* and added that it took time to work through a *“massive learning curve”*, adjusting to China, the city, working in an international school, and *“a thousand other things.”* CP2F said that she and her partner went through a difficult part in the beginning and then gradually became *“united”*, and CP9C said that she and her partner *“had to go through a stormy stage in order to get to a performance stage”*.

Development of sense-making and decision-making practices (C)

This category was a significant one, housing a relatively large number of initial codes related to the development of shared practices aimed at fostering successful sense-making and decision-making processes. These practices appeared to be developed by co-principals both naturally (with time) and strategically.

Practices shared in interviews of co-principals of Schools 8 through 10 were as follows: establish main points and shared understandings (CP1F, CP8C); agree to always manage together any serious issues with faculty (CP8F); keep personal feelings out of the decision-making process (CP9C, CP10C); consider the need for unity in the decision for the sake of the community (CP9C); if you cannot agree on something, walk away from the discussion and come back to discussing the issue again after some time (CP8C, CP8F, CP10C).

Sensitivity to the co-principal partner - the degree of closeness (A)

One co-principal shared that her sensitivity to her new partner helped to build a better relationship than the one she had with her previous partner (CP10C).

Relying on each other (T)

No additional coding contributions from Schools 8 to 10 were made to this category.

Theme: Groups and other individuals in the school community

This theme houses categories related to groups and individuals within the school community with whom the co-principals interacted during their sense-making and decision-making processes. The co-principals' eventual decisions on significant matters may have been impacted or influenced by them, directly or indirectly. A new category, "Impact of different groups on co-principals' sense-making and decision-making processes (ZF)", ended up becoming a significant category and I considered it to be the dominant category for this theme, placing other related categories with it.

Impact of different groups on co-principals' sense-making and decision-making processes (ZF)

In describing the circumstances of different incidents, co-principals referred to different 'groups' within their school community as well as the ways that the co-principals interacted with them while progressing through their sense-making and decision-making processes. This category was a new one that resulted from interviews in Schools 8 through 10. Upon reflection

and a review of interviews in Schools 1 through 7, initial codes gathered from earlier interviews were added to this category.

Several ‘groups’ were referred to by co-principals (CP1F, CP3C, CP4C, CP5F, CP7C, CP8C, CP8F) when discussing different incidents, and these ‘groups’ appeared to have an impact, more often indirect than direct, on their sense-making and decision-making processes: Chinese and Asian parents, foreign teachers, Chinese teachers, and Chinese support staff. One co-principal also distinguished between the Chinese teacher group at their school from Chinese teachers in other regions of China - she felt that teachers on her campus, coming from the region in which their school was located, had a different ‘culture’ and interacted differently as compared with Chinese teachers from other regions in China (CP7C). The business manager, a key member of the sense-making and decision-making team at some schools, may be considered yet another ‘group’.

Discussions between co-principals about incidents appeared to be impacted by their considerations of the differences in the norms, values and cultures of Chinese and foreign teacher groups with respect to: a school event (CP3C), student conduct (CP1F), how an issue was managed (CP7C), teacher benefits (CP5F), working/employment norms and culture (CP4C), and the firmness to which one holds on to principles versus deciding for the ‘greater good’ (CP4C). In one incident, the co-principals had to work out a decision regarding the Chinese support staff (CP8F), and the decision was impacted by considerations of norms and culture. Please see Appendix 4 for related quotations from several co-principals.

Groups within the school community interact differently with the co-principals (L)

More contributions to this category were made by co-principals in Schools 8 through 10 to the extent that it became a relatively important category. The title for this category was modified to include references to not only Chinese teacher and parent groups, but foreign teachers also. Additional coding contributions to this category included: the Chinese co-principal understanding the Chinese teachers better than the foreign co-principal, and vice-versa (CP8C), the two co-principals strategically adopting different roles in meetings with Chinese and Asian parents (CP9F), the two co-principals strategically adopting different roles with the Chinese and foreign teacher groups (CP8C), Chinese parents being more aggressive with the Chinese co-principal (CP8F), the Chinese co-principal being more able to placate Chinese and Asian parents (CP8F), and Chinese parents gravitating more to the Chinese co-principal for resolving issues (CP8C).

Chinese co-principal more often manages the challenges presented by Chinese and Asian parents (K)

After a review of the initial codes that I had included in this category, the title of this category was modified to indicate that the codes collected thus far were almost entirely related the greater role of the Chinese co-principal in resolving matters with Chinese and Asian parents. Comments from co-principals in Schools 8 through 10 (CP8C, CP8F, CP9C, CP9F, CP10F) added to those shared by the foreign and Chinese co-principals interviewed in Schools 1 through 7 (CP2F, CP3F, CP3C, CP4C, CP4F, CP5F, CP7F, CP7C).

Co-principals shared that the Chinese co-principal often helped to diffuse difficult situations with Chinese and Asian parents, helped to “*smooth things over*”, helped to be the ‘receiver’ of complaints, conducted meetings after hours and on weekends with parents, conducted meetings in a manner that suited the culture of the parents, conducted long *post-meeting* meetings without the foreign co-principal present, took a less direct approach in matters, and added content to things spoken by the foreign co-principal in difficult meetings. Please see Appendix 4 for related quotations from several co-principals.

Planning and preparing for decisions and communications (S)

A few new contributions and an initial code from a previous interview were added to this category.

In one situation, the co-principals needed to come up with a decision that would allow a parent to ‘save face’ as well as save the school from any kind of embarrassment (CP4F), and at another campus, the co-principals needed to consider how to prepare teachers (Chinese and foreign) to receive direction on a significant new educational initiative for their campus. One of the co-principals shared that she and her partner needed to decide how best to “*shift the teachers’ mindsets*” in preparation for the implementation of the initiative (CP8C).

Decision-making processes sometimes include others (M)

No additional contributions from Schools 8 through 10 were made to this category.

Impact of external groups on decision-making (ZD)

While not significant, this category related to comments volunteered by co-principals CP9F and CP10F who shared about times in which individuals or groups in their organization (e.g. superintendent, board of directors, owner) influenced their discussions of incidents and/or decision-making processes. The probing of co-principals about influences from these external

individuals and groups was not an aim of mine during my interviews in Schools 1 through 7, and a review of my initial codes from interviews at Schools 1 through 7 revealed no such references to similar influences.

Existence of a business manager and co-principal decision-making team in some schools (J)

Two of the remaining schools also used a school leadership model in which the co-principals worked closely with a ‘business manager’, as a team, to make decisions on significant matters. In addition, it was the business manager that would in most cases work with local government officials and community representatives for purposes of navigating through government regulations, community issues, etc.

Referring to the need to communicate a new government regulation and procedure to teachers, CP9C shared that the two co-principals and business manager agreed to allow the co-principals to share the information with Chinese and foreign teachers on campus, as the co-principals better understood the teachers’ perceptions. The co-principal also shared that it took some time and much effort for the two co-principals and business manager to learn how best to work with each other (i.e. schedules, protocols, communication) to make decisions on matters, and added that making decisions on significant matters with the business manager added an extra layer of protection for the co-principals. Please see Appendix 4 for a related quotation from CP9C.

Theme: Power and authority structures within the co-principalship

This sixth theme was the smallest theme with respect to the number of categories and relative size of the categories and relates to the *possible* influences of power and authority structures on the co-principals’ decision-making processes. Category “ZA” - “Personal priorities and agendas”, a category that was included in the theme, “The principal and what s/he brings to the co-principalship”, was also included in this theme.

Power (ZB)

This new, relatively small category housed comments and feedback from only one of the schools visited and related to power and control. There was a perception by one co-principal that their co-principal partner desired control of their campus and as a result they had experienced many challenges with respect to coming together as co-principals to make joint decisions on matters.

The Chinese co-principal is the principal in authority (D)

No new contributions were made to this category from interviews in Schools 8 through 10.

Personal priorities and agendas (ZA)

This new, relatively small category, which was also placed in the theme, “The principal and what s/he brings to the co-principalship”, was created to group comments from co-principals at two of the schools visited - the comments related to personal priorities and agendas. It was apparent that, when discussing significant issues related to plans for student enrolment, curriculum, resources and the overall vision for their campus, the individual co-principals had different priorities and personal agendas for a given issue and attempted to advocate, sometimes strongly, for their priority or agenda to be realized.

Existence of a business manager and co-principal decision-making team in some schools (J)

The final category for this theme was also included in the theme, “Groups and other individuals in the school community”.

It became apparent through interviews that the schools belonging to the network of ‘Type A’ international schools had adopted the dual culture co-principals + Chinese business manager ‘school leadership team’ model. Apart from purely academic matters, decisions on significant matters were often (if not all the time) made by this team of three individuals. In addition, it was the business manager that dealt with local government and held legal responsibility for the campus.

The dual-culture co-principals working in the ‘Type C’ international schools did not have this dual-culture co-principal + Chinese business manager ‘school leadership team’ model, making final decisions on significant matters themselves.

After reviewing the six emerged themes at the end of the third analysis stage, I decided to merge two of the themes, “The cultural - perceptions, assumptions, and differences” and “The cognitive aspect of dual-culture co-principalships”, due to considerable conceptual overlap of the categories contained within them (i.e. similarity of category properties). This merger resulted in five themes for the completed and final thematic analysis and will be explained further in the subsequent section and Discussion chapter that follows.

4.5 Merger of two themes and the completed thematic analysis

By the end of the third and final thematic analysis stage, a range of categories (32) and six themes had emerged. Despite the relatively small scope of this enquiry, many of the categories that emerged had become ‘saturated’ by the end of the second analysis stage, while several new categories emerged during the third and final analysis stage.

After reviewing the six themes at the end of the third analysis stage, I decided to merge two of the themes, “The cultural - perceptions, assumptions, and differences” and “The cognitive aspect of dual-culture co-principalships” into one theme called, “The cultural and cognitive aspects of the co-principalship” due to considerable conceptual overlap of the categories contained within them i.e. there were similarities in the properties and concepts of several of the categories from both themes. This merger resulted in five themes for the completed and final thematic analysis and will be further explained in the Discussion chapter that follows.

Having presented all emerged categories and themes from my thematic analysis, a presentation of the dual-culture co-principals’ responses regarding their international school’s institutional primary task now follows.

4.6 Institutional primary task

In Section 2.10, I described the concepts of institutional legitimacy, institutional theory and the institutional primary task. For an institution to be a legitimate institution, it must have a ‘primary task’, “what the members of the institution must work on if their institutional work is to be legitimate” (Bunnell et al, 2016b, p. 6). Bunnell (2016a) suggests that organizations need not have an explicit or an agreed upon primary task or that an organization should be working on the task they may have been assigned. Rather, he adds, “it is the task that the organization feels - consciously or unconsciously - it needs to undertake if it is to continue, to carry on” (p 9).

Each of the twenty dual-culture co-principals were asked during individual interviews to share what they considered was their school’s institutional primary task (see Section 3.6.1.2). A summary of their responses to the questions, “*If you could describe one reason for your school’s existence, what would it be? What would be the one reason your school existed for? In other words, what is your school here to do?*” is provided in Table 3 on the following page.

Table 3: Co-principal responses regarding their school's institutional primary task

Co-principal	Co-principals' response on their school's 'institutional primary task'
CP1C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To cater for the needs of Chinese students; To meet students' different education requirements and learning demands; To help students prepare for studying in universities in China or abroad.
CP1F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To offer a variety of programs to students so that they can find their niche in life and to pursue that beyond high-school; To offer a well-rounded holistic education.
CP2C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide a way for Chinese students to still learn Chinese, to meet national requirements; To experience an international education.
CP2F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To offer an option for parents who are looking to send their children overseas for university; To eventually prepare students to go overseas for university without giving up their Chinese citizenship; To be a 'stepping stone' for parents to get their child to another international school for their next stage.
CP3C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To care and nurture our students to become real 21st century global citizens; To provide a holistic education; To help students know who they are, what they want to be, and what contribution they want to make in this world.
CP3F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide a learning environment where children can thrive; To provide a holistic education where children are developed through various specific curricula, character education, and an awareness of world issues; To be in a place where they're safe, where they'll feel secure, where they feel they're able to explore and develop, grow, make mistakes, learn; To provide a setting where the parents and children can feel assured that their children are getting a setting where they can develop within themselves as well as having some rigour to what's expected, and helping children get to those expectations.
CP4C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide a very cozy atmosphere, like a family; To take care of the children, and make our parents trust our school; To provide a very high-quality education where students are willing to improve.
CP4F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To service the needs of international children in this area; To provide a holistic education where we really value the character aspect and not just the academics; To provide the English and Chinese aspect as well, through our co-principal structure and our co-teaching model where we give equal value to both; To provide a place where western and Chinese culture come together as well as the language.
CP5C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide an education where we focus on each individual student and everyone develops themselves better; To provide a place where children can grow up in a safe, healthy environment.
CP5F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide continuity for our students...to provide an overarching K through 12 education; To enable our students who have come to us with this 'East meets West' belief; to enable them to continue with this philosophy of teaching students and raising students in both an Eastern and a Western culture all the way through to graduation.
CP6C (Same individual as CP3C)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To care and nurture our students to become real 21st global citizens; To provide a holistic education for them; To let them know who they are, what they want to be, what contribution they want to make in this world.
CP6F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To promote student learning; To fulfill the school's vision and mission such that as the students who are here experience the opportunities that are provided for them, they will end up looking as

	close as they possibly can to what our vision and mission and philosophies and objectives demonstrate; • To enable students to find out who they are and where they are going.
CP7C	• To provide a group of students in this region who need this type of international education and intercultural environment.
CP7F	• To provide an international education for expat children.
CP8C	• To offer the best international education to families who live in this city; • To create or bring a good influence to the whole community.
CP8F	• To provide an education for the families who have foreign passports in this city; • To be a springboard for Chinese families who have managed to obtain foreign IDs, don't want to be part of the national system anymore, and want their children to go overseas for university.
CP9C	• To introduce Chinese students to international education through our school's 'East meets West' philosophy.
CP9F	• To educate children from K2 to Grade 12 in a manner consistent with our school's vision.
CP10C	• To provide Chinese students in our school's region with a unique education, one that focuses on character education and skills in addition to content; • To help students prepare for the future by providing a holistic education.
CP10F	• To introduce our organization's educational philosophy and unique curriculum to students in other regions in China.

Table 3: Co-principal responses regarding their school's institutional primary task

Feedback from dual-culture co-principals on what they believed was their school's institutional primary task resulted in a variety of responses from the twenty dual-culture co-principals interviewed. Not only were there differing responses across all twenty co-principals, inconsistencies were also observed within most of the co-principal pairs. A review of the concepts of institutional primary task and legitimacy, and a discussion of the co-principals' responses above, will occur in the Discussion chapter, Chapter 5.

4.7 Summary

The thematic analysis of data from individual and combined interviews of ten dual-culture co-principal pairs at ten international schools in China resulted in the emergence of thirty-two Level 2 codes (*categories*) and five themes – these themes served to inform answers to the research questions and the aim for this research enquiry. Each theme represented, to some extent, some form of impact on the sense-making and decision-making processes of dual-culture co-principals leading and managing an international school in China.

Dual-culture co-principals also shared perceptions of what they believed was their school's institutional primary task. A discussion of the co-principals' responses regarding their school's primary task, the five themes that emerged from the thematic analysis, the three research questions and the aim of this research enquiry is provided next, in the Discussion chapter.

Chapter 5 - Discussion

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I begin by briefly introducing the five main themes that emerged from the thematic analysis. While six themes had emerged during the third stage of the thematic analysis (see Section 4.4), I decided to merge two of the themes and will describe the reasons for this merger in Section 5.2.3.

After a brief introduction to the five themes, I present each theme separately in its own section, discussing the categories that were combined to form the theme and highlighting influences on the sense-making and decision-making processes of dual-culture co-principals. Within the discussion of each theme, I also review *aspects* of each theme that were emphasized through one or more of the four ‘carriers’ (symbolic systems, relational systems, activities and artefacts) in each of the three ‘pillars’/elements (regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive) of Scott’s (2014) institutional theory framework. Aspects of each theme that related to the complex nature of the international school settings in which these dual-culture co-principalships operate are also referenced, as this complexity appeared to also impact the ability of the co-principals to secure legitimacy for their international schools.

Having discussed each theme and aspects that relate to the legitimacy of international schools operating with dual-culture co-principalships, a presentation of answers to the three research questions is provided along with a summary of the extent to which I achieved the aim for this enquiry.

The chapter closes with a discussion of the responses from co-principals regarding their international schools’ institutional primary task and a summary of the findings related to the ability of dual-culture co-principals to secure legitimacy for their international schools. I would like to emphasize that it was my intention throughout the thematic analysis stages to allow categories and themes to emerge from the interview data and field notes in a grounded theory approach (Strauss, 1987) *without* Scott’s (2014) institutional theory framework in mind - the categories and themes emerged with guidance from the research questions and related to some form or type of influence or impact on the sense-making and decision-making processes of the dual-culture co-principals.

I now present an overview of the five themes that emerged from the thematic analysis.

5.2 Dual-culture co-principalship themes

Upon further review of the categories and themes resulting from the final stage of the thematic analysis (Section 4.4), two of the themes, “The cultural - perceptions, assumptions, and differences” and “The cognitive aspect of dual-culture co-principalships”, were merged into one theme (Theme 3 – “The cultural and cognitive aspects of the co-principalship”), resulting in five main themes. The reason for the merger of these two themes will be explained in Section 5.2.3.

The five themes resulting from the thematic analysis are listed below and are also displayed in Figure 3 on the following page. I propose that these five themes organize a range of influences that impact the sense-making and decision-making processes of dual-culture co-principals leading and managing international schools in China.

The dual-culture co-principalship themes

Theme 1: The principal and what s/he brings to the co-principalship

Theme 2: The co-principal relationship

Theme 3: The cultural and cognitive aspects of the co-principalship

Theme 4: Groups and other individuals in the school community

Theme 5: Power and authority structures within the co-principalship

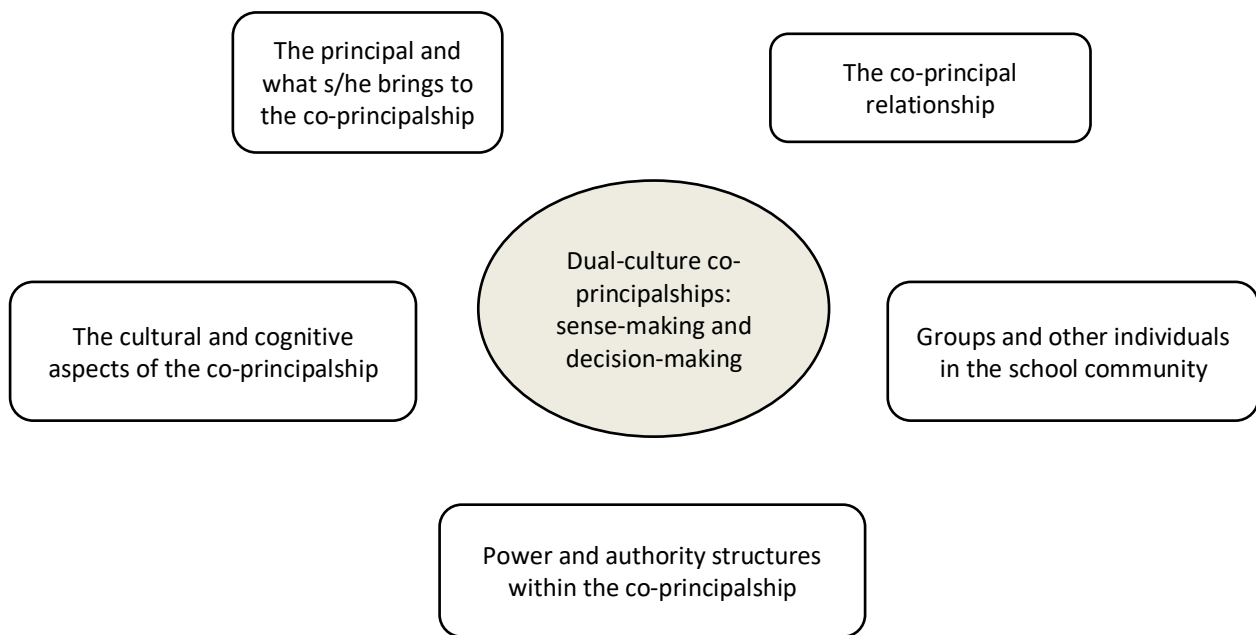


Figure 3 - The five dual-culture co-principalship themes

A discussion of each of the five emerged themes now follows.

5.2.1 Theme 1: The principal and what s/he brings to the co-principalship

Theme introduction

It is an *individual* that arrives in the dual-culture co-principalship role, having come from a previous co-principal role, or more likely, from a solo leadership or management role from a different context (see “Tenure” in Section 2.8.3). In the context of an international school in China using the dual-culture co-principal leadership model, the Chinese co-principal may have occupied the co-principal role for several or more years, experiencing different foreign co-principal partners during her/his tenure, while the foreign co-principal in many cases will be experiencing a co-principal role for the very first time. It may be the foreign co-principal’s first time working in China. In any case, each co-principal will bring their individuality to the relationship: their personality, experience, culture, values, opinions, and the norms they have been exposed to and adopted over the course of their lives and from other contexts. It was evident from interviews that aspects of the individual co-principal had an impact on the co-principals’ sense-making and decision-making processes, both positively and negatively, and that individuals changed with time.

Personality

The personality of the co-principal partner had a significant impact on the co-principal relationship and their ability to come together to make sense of matters and make decisions. Although ‘personality’ is a concept that is not well-defined, the term was used often in interviews by co-principals to describe not only the character of their co-principal partners but also when describing characteristics important for individuals considering taking on a co-principal role. In Section 2.7.5, I described the research of several authors who claim that the work of principals in solving complex organizational issues relies on their *individual* sense-making abilities, (Kegan, 1982, 1994; Loevinger, 1976, 1979).

The connection between the ability of the foreign co-principal to adjust to the dual-culture co-principal role and their personality was made by several co-principals - compatibility issues can lead to challenging relationships. A variety of related challenges facing co-principalships have been reported by other co-principalship researchers (Eckman, 2006, 2007; Masters, 2013) - see Sections 2.5.4, 2.5.5 and 2.5.6.

One co-principal commented that you needed to be ‘the right kind of person’ for the dual-culture co-principal role i.e. to be successful in a co-principal role one needed to have certain personal characteristics. Several co-principals noted that the individual’s personality relates to both his/her ability to make decisions with someone else rather than only by him/herself (as a solo principal) as well as his/her cultural sensitivity. Participants talked about the personality of their partner with respect to the degree of personal attachment to a decision, the ability and/or desire to look at issues from the other’s perspective, and the degree to which a co-principal holds on to certain principles. Several co-principals mentioned personality when discussing the importance of humility as well as not taking things personally when discussing a challenging issue.

Experience

Co-principals discussed previous experiences having an impact on a co-principal’s ability to operate successfully in the dual-culture co-principal role. Being expected to lead and manage (Leithwood et al, 1999) while having to relate to a partner with a different background, culture, and first language, and then having to navigate through sense-making and decision-making processes *together* would seem to require individuals with certain skills and relevant prior experience. These prior skills and experience call to mind the historical conditioning of interactions in a CELLS perspective of schools (Hawkins & James, 2017) – the additional interactions of the dual-culture co-principals and the individual co-principal’s ‘interactional

capability’ (e.g. their ‘intercultural competency’ - see Section 2.7.4), would appear to add to the complexity of this leadership model.

Taking on a leadership and management role for the first time would be a challenge for any new co-principal, and knowing how to navigate through discussions and difficult meetings with parents and teachers in a new context may require new skills for a foreign principal arriving in a dual-culture co-principal role having come from a solo principal/leadership role in their home country. It was stated by some Chinese co-principals that learning and/or working overseas, or having previously worked with foreign co-principals, allowed them to more quickly adapt to a ‘new’ co-principal relationship.

Even with leadership and management experience behind them, there appears to be a period of adjustment for principals to get used to the co-principal role. This process, as mentioned by one co-principal, may require an individual to move through an internal process of change with respect to their own interpretive and decision-making mechanisms. This internal process may be related to the movement of an individual through different stages of Adult Ego Development (AED) - see Section 2.7.5. The internal learning process described by co-principals is also mentioned in a category below entitled, “The foreign co-principal has learned along the way”.

Values and opinions

Scott (2014) states that “values are expressions of goals or, more precisely, the criteria employed in selecting goals; norms are the generalized rules governing behaviour that specify appropriate means for pursuing goals” (p 53). Some co-principals shared that they often had the same or similar values when making decisions on matters, but a discussion of significant incidents in many interviews revealed that at times co-principals shared different opinions on a range of issues. Principals appear to arrive in a dual-culture co-principalship in China with values, norms and opinions related to many aspects of a school’s operations i.e. how a school *should* be led and managed. Again, the historical conditioning of interactions in a CELLS perspective of schools (Hawkins & James, 2017) may be relevant here. Wilhelmson and Döös (2014) claim that sharing similar values is important for positive co-principal relationships and decision-making (see Section 2.5.6) - the co-principal relationship is discussed in the next theme (Section 5.3.2).

Development of personal strategies

Co-principals shared that they had developed personal strategies which helped to affect a positive outcome in decision-making processes with their partner. Co-principals’ comments revealed the possibility that these personal strategies were developed as a result of gaining an

understanding of the partner's personality and values. From a CELLS perspective (Hawkins & James, 2017), the interactions between the co-principals are the result of the individual motivations and intentions of the co-principals. This perspective can also be seen in the next category, "Personal priorities and agendas".

Personal priorities and agendas

In two of the schools it was apparent from discussions of significant incidents that at times an individual co-principal will desire to advocate a particular stance based on a personal priority or agenda. If we accept leadership to have something to do with 'influence' (Bush & Glover, 2003; Gronn, 2002a), there is evidence to suggest that some co-principals purposively attempted to 'influence' the other co-principal in order to achieve a desired outcome. I suggest that such influences, depending on their nature and frequency, would appear to impact the co-principals' decision-making and combined leadership processes.

The foreign co-principal learned along the way

Comments made by both Chinese and foreign co-principals suggested that the foreign co-principal, since arriving in their new context (i.e. international school, China) and in this leadership model has gradually developed knowledge and skills that may not have been required in their home country context. One co-principal shared that school leaders who have only ever been working in their home country environment experience a very different context when arriving in a dual-culture co-principalship in China and added that one needs to 'unlearn' everything they learned as a solo principal back in their home country.

Lack of provision of guidance and training

Induction programmes, whether for teachers, managers or leaders, are not uncommon in international schools, and there is much literature that speaks to the importance of such programmes (Bush, 2018) - see also Section 2.8.3. Out of 20 co-principals who were sent the Survey Monkey survey (see Appendix 3), 18 participants responded. 15 of these co-principals responded to indicate that they had not received any training or induction into the dual-culture co-principal role, and the three remaining co-principals indicated that they had some type of informal training from the school's foreign superintendent.

Two co-principals shared of the 'learning curve' that needs to be experienced in making the transition into a co-principal role from a solo principal role, particularly if the individual is arriving in the context of an international school in China from a foreign country (domestic education) context. According to Scott (2014), while "some values and norms are applicable

to all members of the collectivity, others apply only to selected types of actors or positions. The latter gives rise to roles: conceptions of appropriate goals and activities for particular individuals or specified social positions” (p 64). Principals arriving in a dual-culture co-principal role appear to experience personal challenges due to “normative expectations” (ibid, p 64) of their principal role.

Theme 1 and institutional theory

Normative pillar - Symbolic systems

The symbolic systems carrier of the normative pillar includes the values and principles that underpin practice, norms, expectations, prevailing customs and accepted patterns of practice (Scott, 2014).

It was evident through discussions of significant incidents that each of the two dual-culture co-principals brings to their international school a set of values, opinions, norms and expectations of how a school should be led and managed. In some cases, these may align, but in others, they may differ, and personal priorities and agendas at times may also differ. The symbolic systems carrier of the normative pillar reveals legitimacy issues *if* the values, norms and expectations of the two co-principals are not aligned.

Normative pillar - Activities

The various activities that act as a carrier of the normative pillar includes organizational roles, jobs, tasks and habitual/routine ways of operating, especially collectively (Bunnell et al, 2016c).

Although limited, informal training was provided for *some* of the co-principals at an early stage in their dual-culture co-principalship, the majority of the co-principals stated that they did not receive any training with regards to this leadership model (see Appendix 3 - Survey Monkey Survey Results). The activities carrier of the normative pillar reveals that co-principals who are not clear about their role and the ways of operating in a successful co-principal relationship will create legitimacy issues for their co-principalship and the school community.

Cultural-cognitive pillar - Symbolic systems

The symbolic systems carrier of the cultural–cognitive pillar is concerned with shared conceptions of the nature of reality and common sense-making, are symbolic in nature, and relate to categories, classifications, groupings, schemas, frameworks and models (Bunnell et al, 2016c).

The impact of the co-principals' personalities (both positive and negative) on the dual-culture co-principalships was very evident from the data. The impact was significant enough that the success of the co-principalship was rather dependent on the compatibility of the co-principals and their ability to work through differences in norms, culture (intercultural competency), taken-for-granted understandings, and assumptions - in other words, on their ability to merge or manage differences in their respective personal frames and schemas. Adding to this complexity is the realization that the co-principals would be expected to influence (lead) their school community with a shared understanding (i.e. vision) of where they wanted their school to go; a shared understanding of their school's institutional primary task would also be extremely important. It is evident from a consideration of the symbolic systems carrier of the cultural-cognitive pillar that the legitimacy of international schools using the dual-culture co-principal leadership model would be dependent on shared understandings and the *ability* of the co-principals to develop shared understandings.

Theme summary

The ability and willingness of co-principals to come together, to make sense of things together, and to eventually produce decisions together, would appear to require individuals with a certain set of personal characteristics. The personality, culture, intercultural competence, experience, values, norms, personal desires and priorities that an individual brings to the dual-culture co-principalship have, to some extent, an impact on this ability and willingness. The combination of the two individuals...the two personalities, is also a consideration.

The legitimacy of both the dual-culture co-principalship leadership model and of international schools using this leadership model appears to be dependent on the makeup of the *individual* principals: their personalities, culture, intercultural competencies, norms, values, expectations, experience, personal priorities and agendas, and willingness to learn and develop shared understandings.

The principal brings their individuality to the co-principal relationship, a theme discussed in the next section.

5.2.2 Theme 2: The co-principal relationship

Theme introduction

Two principals enter into a relationship through which they are expected to lead and manage an international school *together*...to make sense of issues and eventually make decisions on a range of matters, from routine to significant in nature. Interviews of co-principals and

discussions of significant incidents revealed that the relationship of the two principals had a significant impact on their ability to successfully fulfill these tasks and navigate through these processes.

From a CELLS perspective of schools (Hawkins & James, 2017), the complexity of schools led and managed by dual-culture co-principals and of this leadership model itself would appear to increase due to several dimensions of the co-principals' interactions: the heterogeneity of interactors (two principals from different cultures); the number of interactors (two principals instead of one); feedback (the co-principals provide feedback to each other); interactions change those interacting (each co-principal may be changed by the other). The more the co-principals interact with each other (a necessity for this leadership model), the more the complexity of this leadership model increases and the larger the impact on the co-principals' ability to secure legitimacy for their school.

An analysis of the interviews identified several aspects of the dual-culture relationship that have a bearing on their sense-making and decision-making processes.

Trust

Trust between the co-principals appears to be a vital component of the co-principal relationship and an important factor in the health and effectiveness of the relationship, evidenced by comments from many of the co-principals. Trust has been described elsewhere as important for decision-making (Wilhelmson & Döös, 2014) and a challenge for co-principalships (Eckman, 2006, 2007) - see Sections 2.5.4 and 2.5.6; more generally, the importance of developing trust by school leadership has also been reported elsewhere (Fink, 2005; Precey, 2012) - see Section 2.5.4. Many of the co-principals who appeared to enjoy a successful relationship talked of a deep trust between them.

Interviews revealed that without trust, the ability to come together, discuss issues, and make decisions on significant matters would be detrimentally impacted - trust is important for solving problems and getting through challenges together. During the daily operations of a school, a co-principal will at times need to trust their partner to make quick decisions without consulting each other, and trust allows a co-principal to communicate messages to staff on their partner's behalf.

Trust evidently is the foundation for the co-principalship relationship and needs to be built up first. For a principal new to a co-principal role, trust was linked to the principal's ability to adjust to this leadership model. Once built, it was important to maintain trust by being honest, open and making an effort to inform each other of important matters. The *lack* of trust in one

co-principalship eventually resulted in a leadership structure where the principals agreed to lead and manage different divisions of the school. Subsequently, they had very little to do with each other.

Personality seemed to have something to do with the ease to which trust may be built - it can be built more quickly with some principals than others.

Time is needed for building the co-principal relationship

Co-principals described the need for a period of time to become comfortable in their role and their new context. Time was also needed to build the dual-culture co-principal relationship to the point where both individuals felt comfortable with each other. Time was needed to get used to the partner's personality and 'culture', their strengths and working style, their way of thinking, and to learn how to relate to their partner and how to make decisions together.

The first six months together were difficult for several co-principalships - there was an initial 'rocky' period before their relationship improved. Their comments call to mind the work of Carr et al (2018) on Adult Ego Development (AED) and personality, discussed in Section 2.7.5 and Theme 1. Is it possible that these 'rocky' periods act like "disequilibrating experiences" that help "bring about a change in AED" (ibid, p 3) in individual co-principals, leading to a more mature co-principalship relationship?

Development of sense-making and decision-making practices

The development of sense-making and decision-making practices, or protocols, was an important part of many of the dual-culture co-principal relationships - discussions of incidents revealed that co-principals created practices that helped them make sense of issues together. For example, before and during their conversations about an incident, co-principals agreed to establish main points as well as shared understandings and priorities.

Practices related to decision-making put in place jointly by co-principals included the defining of decision-making steps, which members of staff/faculty should be involved in decisions, what types of issues required both co-principals (and a business manager) to be involved in a decision, and when and how a decision should be communicated. Some co-principals agreed to always manage together any serious issues with faculty, to consider the need for unity in a decision for the sake of the community, to keep each other informed of important matters or discussions, and to remind each other to keep personal feelings out of the decision-making process. Several co-principals shared that if they could not agree on something, they would agree to walk away from the discussion and come back to the issue again after some time.

Sensitivity to the co-principal partner - the degree of closeness

It was notable that with some of the apparently successful co-principalships there was a high degree of closeness in their professional relationship. It was also evident that some co-principalships were closer, more intimate, than others.

Knowing things that bothered the partner, having a deep understanding of their characteristics, and being sensitive to the moods and 'state-of-mind' of their partner appeared to help the co-principals' working relationship. One co-principal shared that his relationship with his co-principal partner was not an intimate one but added that their inability to communicate in a common language was a likely factor - they used a translator for *all* their discussions.

Relying on each other

Co-principals described a variety of benefits of having a partner to share the leadership and management of their campus with. Having support from a partner when dealing with parents, managing teachers, and implementing educational changes were several of the benefits of this leadership model. Similar benefits of co-principalships have been reported by Eckman (2006, 2007), Thomson (2006) and Gronn (2004) - see Section 2.5.4.

It is perhaps more with sense-making and decision-making processes that foreign co-principals shared their appreciation of the dual-culture co-principal model and their Chinese co-principal partner - having a partner from the local culture and of the opposite gender were added benefits. Having more time to reflect on an issue, make notes and strategize during challenging meetings as well as having someone with you who is familiar with the culture and context were of great benefit to foreign co-principals.

Theme 2 and institutional theory

Normative pillar - Symbolic systems

This carrier of the normative pillar includes the values and principles that underpin practice, norms, expectations, prevailing customs and accepted patterns of practice (Scott, 2014).

Trust was a significant factor for the dual-culture co-principals' relationship. To have and/or develop trust in one's partner appears to require time and effort, and a dual-culture co-principalship without trust may have a detrimental impact on the co-principalship and the school community. Co-principals will have expectations for each other, communicated or not - if these expectations (a component of the symbolic systems carrier of the normative pillar) are

not met, the leadership model may crumble and the co-principals' ability to carry out their school's institutional primary task weakened.

Normative pillar - Activities

The various activities that act as a carrier of the normative pillar include organizational roles, jobs, tasks and habitual/routine ways of operating, especially collectively (Bunnell et al, 2016c).

Role ambiguity (Bunnell, 2006) was discussed in Section 2.8.3. It was evident from the data that for some co-principals there were different conceptions of what they believed their role should be, particularly in the beginning of their relationship. Mismatches between the co-principals as to what their roles should be would seem to impact the legitimacy of the dual-culture co-principalship.

Dual-culture co-principals without routines and habits (i.e. practices, protocols) appeared to be less successful than others, and co-principals who had established with time a set of sense-making and decision-making practices for their particular co-principalship seemed to experience a stronger relationship. The activities carrier of the normative pillar illustrates the need for clarity in roles and shared practices/routines for co-principals to be able to secure legitimacy for their international school.

Normative pillar - Artefacts

This carrier of the normative pillar encompasses objects that meet conventions and standards and demonstrate that legitimate norms have been complied with (Bunnell et al, 2016c).

The only artefact that directly relates to the co-principalship would appear to be a 'job description' document, an item that many in the education field would come to expect in some form when taking on any position at a school. Comments from co-principals regarding job descriptions were rather diverse across the ten schools visited. In some cases, co-principals shared that they (the Chinese and foreign co-principals) were provided with *identical* job descriptions for their co-principal position, and one of these co-principals shared that he had never looked at it. At several other schools visited, co-principals shared that they had never received a job description for their co-principalship role. The co-principals who shared that they *did* have a job description for their co-principal position (which, again, was identical for both Chinese and foreign co-principals at these schools) added that 'in reality', they (the two co-principals) had mutually agreed on differentiating some aspects of their roles.

According to the artefacts carrier of the normative pillar, the ability of dual-culture co-principals to secure legitimacy for their school would appear to increase if the leadership model were formally described, understood and embraced by the co-principals and the school community.

Cultural-cognitive pillar - Relational systems

This carrier of the cultural–cognitive pillar relates to the extent to which the relational systems within the institution conform to those in other similar institutions, and the extent to which the institution has a broadly similar identity to other comparable institutions (Bunnell et al, 2016c).

The dual-culture co-principalship appears to be a leadership model that is very much a ‘relationship’. In this relationship, the co-principals share ideas and concepts, and where a solo principal would have a ‘senior leadership team’ to share ideas and concepts with and then possibly be expected to come up with a decision on a matter *by herself/himself*, the co-principals need to do this together.

The relational systems carrier of the cultural-cognitive pillar emphasizes the relational nature of the dual-culture co-principal leadership model, a model not found in most schools around the globe. If one considers the extent to which international schools operating with a dual-culture co-principalship have a dissimilar leadership model compared with other comparable schools (Bunnell et al, 2016c), the legitimacy of these international schools is questionable.

Theme summary

For a variety of reasons, the relational nature of the dual-culture co-principalship leadership model adds to the complexity of the model and to the international school that the co-principals lead and manage.

The overall health of the co-principal relationship was a significant factor with respect to their sense-making and decision-making processes. Trust, a vital component for an effective relationship, takes time to develop and needs to be maintained. Time was needed by a principal new the dual-culture co-principal role (and their international school context) to learn about their role, their partner, the context, and how to share the decision-making process with another principal from a different culture.

The implementation and maintenance of sense-making and decision-making practices would seem to bring organization and structure to the working life of the co-principals and serve to foster an effective relationship. If the co-principalship is working well, the co-principals are able to enjoy having someone to ‘lean on’.

The degree of closeness or intimacy of the co-principals may not necessarily have an impact on co-principals' sense-making and decision-making processes, but I argue that it is something to be considered. It was quite evident from interviews that the more successful co-principalships (i.e. gauged through impressions of openness, trust, collegiality, harmony, and the presence of laughter during interviews) were those described by co-principals as very close and intimate - Bunnell (2008) had also described 'improving the sense of satisfaction' as a benefit in the dual-culture co-principalship he studied. I add here that these particular co-principalships were in place for four or more years.

The extent to which the dual-culture co-principals can agree on expectations of each other, trust each other, align their personal priorities and agendas, develop common practices and protocols, build a close relationship, and have clarity in their roles appears to impact their ability to effectively lead and manage their school, secure legitimacy for their international school and carry out their school's institutional primary task. The acceptability of this leadership model by the global school leadership community may also impact their school's legitimacy.

The cultural and cognitive aspects of the co-principals' sense-making and decision-making processes are discussed in the next section.

5.2.3 Theme 3: The cultural and cognitive aspects of the co-principalship

Theme introduction

After reflection and review of the two tentative themes, "The cultural - perceptions, assumptions, and differences" and "The cognitive aspect of dual-culture co-principalships" (see Section 4.4), I decided to merge them into this main theme due to the close relationship between culture and cognition. Scott (2014) explains, "our use of the hyphenated label *cognitive-culture* [italics his] emphasizes that internal interpretive processes are shaped by external cultural frameworks" (p 67) and Geertz (1973) states that "culture consists of socially established structures of meaning" (p 5).

This theme is about the cultural and cognitive aspects of the co-principals' efforts at making sense of matters and making decisions. As noted in the discussion of Theme 1, from a CELLS perspective of schools (Hawkins & James, 2017), there is a historical dimension to the interactions in a school which are "culturally shaped" (p 4) - the authors note that this dimension of interactions is often "inadequately considered in analyses of complex human systems" (p 4).

It was evident from discussions of significant incidents that culture, cultural differences, meanings and understandings impacted and influenced the efforts and interactions of the co-principals.

The cultural aspect of dual-culture co-principalships - perceptions, assumptions, and differences

As defined in Section 2.6, a ‘dual-culture co-principalship’ is a co-principalship comprised of two principals from two different *societal* or *national* cultures. In Section 2.7, I discussed the fuzzy concept of culture, both societal and organizational, and did so with respect to their relationship with the concept of leadership. In this discussion chapter section, when using the term ‘culture’, I will be referring to *societal* or *national* culture and will be using it from an ‘external reality’ perspective (James & Connolly, 2009). If and when discussing *organizational culture*, I will use the entire term for clarity.

Although I have used the term ‘foreign’ to describe the origin of the foreign co-principals (the co-principals interviewed were citizens of countries such as Australia, Canada, USA, UK, Netherlands and New Zealand), I do not imply that there is one foreign (or ‘western’) culture, and while I have used the term ‘Chinese’ to describe the culture of the Chinese co-principals, I would not suggest that ‘cultures’ across China are the same.

Interviews revealed that culture is a concept that appears to exist as an external reality (Connolly, James, & Beales, 2011) in the minds of co-principals - co-principals perceived ‘culture’ as real and as being involved in a variety of aspects of their co-principalship experience. Through discussions of significant incidents, co-principals shared of cultural differences both between themselves and between the individual co-principals and different groups in the school community (see Section 5.2.4). These differences appeared to be differences in understandings, assumptions, beliefs, and socially established structures of meaning.

A Chinese co-principal partner was referred to by one foreign co-principal as a ‘cultural filter’ in meetings through which meanings were conveyed and possibly modified in both directions, and another foreign co-principal said that his Chinese partner better understood the culture of their (Chinese/Asian) parent community than he did.

Symbolic systems are linked with culture. Citing Swidler (1986), Scott (2014) states that in “settled” times, “culture accounts for continuities...organizing and anchoring patterns of action,” and in times of change, culture functions more like a “tool kit”, providing repertoires “from which actors select different pieces for constructing lines of action” (p 47). Interviews

of the co-principals revealed that co-principals in some situations draw on their cultural ‘tool kit’ to make sense of issues, make decisions, and communicate those decisions.

The need for cultural awareness and sensitivity was noted by several co-principals. Being exposed to other cultures in prior experiences/contexts appeared to help co-principals adjust to the co-principal relationship and their new context: having to navigate through challenges with parents as well as faculty and staff from different cultures was a common theme in interviews. As discussed previously in Section 2.7.4, leadership has been linked with societal culture through the concept of ‘intercultural competency’ (Gudykunst, 2003). Intercultural competency is, according to Taylor (1994), “a transformative process whereby the stranger develops an adaptive capacity, altering his or her perspective to effectively understand and accommodate the demands of the host culture” (p 156). Co-principals were aware of the need for this competency for both their role and context, and several foreign co-principals highlighted how this competency has grown with time.

Referring to the research of several other authors (Gerstner & Day, 1994; Hofstede, 1984), Hallinger and Leithwood (1998) state that “the broader societal culture exerts an influence on administrators beyond the influence exerted by a specific organization’s culture” (pp 128, 129). Chinese/Asian parents appeared to be a rather strong presence in many of the incidents and cultural challenges discussed, from both foreign and Chinese co-principals’ perspectives.

The cognitive aspect of dual-culture co-principalships

Meanings and understandings

Scott (2014) claims that “meanings arise in interaction and are maintained and transformed as they are employed to make sense of the ongoing stream of happenings” (p 67). Discussions of incidents revealed that, with respect to both the co-principals’ interactions between themselves and between themselves and other groups in the school community (see Theme 4), there were at times differences in both the conceptual understandings of the co-principals (e.g. about international education) as well as interpretations by the co-principals of the meanings conveyed to them by Chinese/Asian parents.

These differences in understandings and meanings appeared to be related to culture, organizational culture, norms, cognition and other factors such as language proficiency. It was evident from several co-principals that the Chinese/English language capabilities of the two co-principals had an impact on developing shared understandings in meetings with Chinese/Asian parents. One co-principal pair established the practice of having a third-party translator in all meetings with parents (for significant matters) in order to ensure that parents and co-principals

had confidence in having shared meanings and an authentic understanding of the discussion content, and another co-principal pair made it a common practice to have a bilingual member of staff act as a translator in their weekly meetings. Searching for and establishing shared meanings and understandings appeared to be a significant aspect of the co-principals' communications when discussing significant matters and making decisions on things.

Being *direct* in discussions aimed at establishing shared understandings is important, claimed one co-principal, and several co-principals stated that looking for shared goals helped them develop shared understandings of issues. Two Chinese co-principals expressed that their overseas training and experiences working with faculty and staff from different countries had helped them have a more developed understanding of Chinese and 'western' culture and shared that this awareness in turn helped them to establish shared understandings across all the groups in their school. Acting as a 'bridge' between the Chinese and foreign faculty and staff was a role that one Chinese co-principal described as an important function she served at her school.

I suggest that when each co-principal takes time to reflect on a significant matter *during* interpretive and decision-making processes, they will do so using their own cultural, normative and experiential frameworks, amongst others. To what extent a co-principal attempts to consider the lenses through which his/her partner sees an issue may depend on a variety of personal attributes (see Section 5.2.1, Theme 1).

It's important to be 'on the same page'

While this category was not a significant one, the use of the phrase 'on the same page' by some co-principals appeared to suggest that establishing common understandings and meanings surrounding significant matters was important. Co-principals shared their desire to be 'on the same page' when, for example, they were in the process of making a decision, or preparing to communicate a decision to parents or faculty/staff. One co-principal stated that she and her co-principal partner 'survived' the co-principalship and were able to lead and manage the school successfully because they were always 'on the same page'. Being 'on the same page' also helped some co-principals avoid situations where faculty sought to 'play one co-principal off against the other'.

Taking time to work through the decision-making process

Time would be needed for *any* principal to make a decision on a significant matter, but co-principals shared that, for a variety of reasons, a period of time (and sometimes considerable time) was required for their decision-making processes. One reason was, for example, the need

to re-visit a sensitive topic again and again with their partner until both co-principals were in agreement.

In some of the international schools visited, decisions on significant matters often involved the co-principals and a ‘business manager’. One co-principal noted that incorporating an additional member of staff in discussions added more time to the decision-making process, and another co-principal noted that matching available times to allow the three colleagues to meet sometimes took time.

Role Ambiguity

Ambiguity around and misunderstandings of the mandate, nature and scope of the co-principal role led to challenges and (initially) a difficult co-principal relationship for some principals. For one co-principalship, these challenges persisted, but for two co-principalships, their relationships improved with time. The importance of the co-principals establishing and agreeing on role boundaries was advice offered by two different co-principals and having a job description in place was supported by another. As noted in the literature review section (Section 2.8.3), authors have claimed that role ambiguity is a subset of role stress (Bunnell, 2006; Pettegrew & Wolf, 1982) - the absence of clear or adequate information about the role may be relevant to the experiences shared by some of the dual-culture co-principals interviewed. Some co-principals revealed a high degree of stress in the beginning stages of their co-principalship due to misunderstandings and/or ambiguity of their co-principal role. Role stress may also result from the potentially complex nature of the co-principalship leadership model in combination with the “complex organizational structure” (Bunnell, 2004, p. 22) of international schools.

Theme 3 and institutional theory

The cultural–cognitive pillar of institutional theory embodies the “shared notions of the nature of reality and the jointly held sense-making schema which enable meaning-making and interpretation” (Bunnell et al, 2016b, p. 8) and is based on “a shared understanding of assumptions - matters that are taken-for-granted. It also pertains to “actors’ shared schemes for understanding, interpretation and action” (Bunnell et al, 2016c, p. 9).

Unlike the regulative and normative pillars which deal with matters related to conscious choices, the cultural-cognitive pillar deals with the unconscious. Presuming that there are a variety of cultures in the international school communities visited, and if the schools, through their organizational cultures, cultivate a particular ‘thought-style’ which is focused on the particular ways of thinking about and doing things (Douglas, 1986), it was my desire to consider

which aspects of the themes dealt with the co-principals' sense-making schemas, meaning-making and interpretive processes, and taken-for-granted understandings.

Cultural-cognitive pillar - Symbolic systems

This carrier of the cultural–cognitive pillar is concerned with shared conceptions of the nature of reality and common sense-making; is symbolic in nature; and relates to categories, classifications, groupings, schemas, frameworks and models (Bunnell et al, 2016c).

It was very evident from the interview data that co-principals experienced cultural differences, differences in understandings, perceptions, assumptions, beliefs, and socially established structures of meaning in processes and practices, between themselves and between the individual co-principals and different groups in the school community. Culture aside, co-principals are faced with an ongoing process of navigating through differences in conceptual meanings and understandings with their partners. Language ability challenges added to these processes, of course, but the highly proficient English ability of many of the Chinese co-principals appeared to validate that the differences experienced by the co-principals were also related to culture, background as well as personal schemas and frames. The symbolic systems carrier of the cultural-cognitive pillar shows that an inability on the co-principals' part to establish shared meanings and understandings, whether related to culture or not, would result in legitimacy issues for their schools.

Cultural-cognitive pillar - Activities

The activities carrier of the cultural–cognitive pillar relates to tendencies, inclinations and dominant modes, logics and discourse (Bunnell et al, 2016c).

The working life of dual-culture co-principals in the context of their international school in China appeared to be one where, through a variety of interactions (e.g. conversations, meetings, body language), they develop personal understandings and meanings as they work towards shared understandings (i.e. attempt to be 'on the same page'), manage cultural differences, navigate through meetings which were at times in either Chinese or English, and implement strategies for dealing with parents or teacher groups. The activities carrier of the cultural-cognitive pillar and a CELLS perspective of schools (Hawkins & James, 2017) emphasize the importance that these interactions have on the ability of co-principals to carry out their school's primary task and to secure legitimacy for their school.

Theme summary

It was very evident from the data that the dual-culture co-principals interviewed are often making their way through interpretive processes as they prepare for decisions and plan to communicate those decisions, at the same time working through cultural and cognitive differences and facing challenges with respect to meanings and understandings. Intercultural competencies appear to help co-principals with their sense-making processes. Chinese co-principals may have had the benefit of working in their school context for several or more years, building up experience working with: more than one foreign co-principal (see “Tenure” in Section 2.8.3), teachers from a wide range of countries, and foreign and Chinese/Asian parent communities. Foreign co-principals expressed a steep learning curve upon arriving in the co-principal role and their international school context and shared how their intercultural competency grew with time, and Chinese co-principals shared that it takes time for the foreign co-principal to learn how to manage their way through cultural challenges.

The cultural ‘tool kit’ that one co-principal referred to, a repertoire of cultural skills used to make sense of issues in their school context, make decisions, and decide how best to communicate those decisions, needs time to develop. The ‘frames’ that Scott (2014) refers to may be the co-principals’ individual cultural, normative and experiential frameworks; evaluating, judging, inferring and predicting all appear to be part of the dual-culture co-principal’s job - an apparently challenging job given the cultural diversity and complexity of their international school context (Bunnell, 2004). Finally, several co-principals shared the need for clarity in their role, both with respect to their responsibilities and the scope of their mandate - role ambiguity has been a source of role stress for principals according to the literature (see Section 2.8.3).

The ability of dual-culture co-principals to secure legitimacy for their international schools appears to be dependent on the co-principals’ ability to establish shared meanings and understandings - actions they take towards achieving these meanings and understandings would appear to be crucial. The co-principals’ interpretive and decision-making processes as well as their ability to secure legitimacy for their school are not only impacted by the co-principals themselves, but by groups in the school community. The impact of groups and other individuals in the school community on this ability and these processes is discussed in the next section.

5.2.4 Theme 4: Groups and other individuals in the school community

Theme introduction

I had set out in this thesis project with the unit of study being the two dual-culture co-principals at each school and this remained the case throughout the project. I had imagined at the outset that gaining an insight into the sense-making and decision-making processes of the co-principals and the factors that impact these processes could be accomplished through an understanding of the interactions *between the co-principals only*. Yet, this was not the case - it became evident that these processes also appeared to be influenced by different groups and other individuals within the school community.

I considered category ZF - “Impact of different groups on co-principals’ sense-making and decision-making processes” to be the ‘cornerstone’ for this theme, and thus this theme’s introduction is essentially the content from that category. I described in my review of the literature (see Section 2.7.2) that some authors have reported on the impact of organizational culture on leadership and decision-making (Jalal, 2017; Nikčević, 2016).

The groups identified by the co-principals during discussions of incidents, as described in Section 4.4, were Chinese and Asian parents, Chinese teachers, foreign teachers, and Chinese support staff. One co-principal also distinguished the Chinese teacher group at her school from Chinese teachers working at schools in other regions in China. The ‘business manager’, a key member of the decision-making team at some of the schools visited, was also identified by co-principals as having an impact on their sense-making and decision-making processes.

In Section 2.7.1, I reviewed Holliday’s (1999) definitions of ‘large’ and ‘small’ cultures. I would like to note that it was not my *intention* to reify these groups in this enquiry nor provide a reductionist perspective on the interactions between the co-principals and these different groups. Yet, throughout this thesis project I have used a ‘large’ culture perspective, admitting also that I, along with participants, had reified ‘small’ cultures when discussing significant incidents and ‘groups’.

The Chinese and Asian parents, Chinese teachers, foreign teachers, and Chinese support staff could all be considered ‘small’ cultures due to the apparent cohesiveness of their groupings. It was very evident from the interviews and analysis that, in the minds of most of the dual-culture co-principals, these groups ‘existed’ in their school communities. These ‘small’ cultures were identified by co-principals by national and ethnic features, and I admit that both participants and I did so in our conversations. These groups may represent ‘small cultures’ within the school community, each with its own norms, values and cultural underpinnings. The business manager

may be considered a ‘small culture’ of one. From a CELLS perspective of schools (Hawkins & James, 2017), these groups would be considered the different human systems comprising the school.

Groups within the school community interact differently with the co-principals

When a solo principal leads and manages a school, the stakeholders within the school community typically know who to approach for matters unresolved at lower administrative levels. With a dual-culture co-principalship, there are obviously two principals that individuals or groups can approach, and it was evident from discussions of incidents that groups within the school community would sometimes interact differently with each of the co-principals.

Some co-principals shared that Chinese teachers were more comfortable interacting with the Chinese co-principal, and foreign teachers with the foreign co-principal, when faced with a challenging issue. These differences should not be generalized across all the international schools visited and across all circumstances, though, as one Chinese co-principal emphasized that visits were made to her office by both Chinese and foreign staff. One Chinese co-principal explained that the Chinese teachers at her school felt that the Chinese co-principal better understood them compared with the foreign co-principal. Due to differences in their interactions with the Chinese and foreign teacher groups, this same co-principal said that the two co-principals strategically adopted different roles with the groups.

Generalizing the behaviour and ‘culture’ of the Chinese/Asian parents at their schools, co-principals shared that these parents would sometimes communicate different meanings on a given matter separately to the two co-principals (e.g. after a meeting), and if meeting with co-principals separately, some Chinese parents employed different meeting strategies (e.g. emotions, tone, pressure, language used). A Chinese co-principal added that the Chinese parents were at times more aggressive with the Chinese co-principal.

In the other direction, some co-principals strategically adopted different roles in meetings with Chinese and Asian parents, believing that this particular parent group would relate differently to the Chinese and foreign co-principals. Co-principals interacted often with this particular ‘small culture’ and it was evident that they adopted strategies and protocols in working with them. The impact of this and other ‘small cultures’ in the school on the co-principals’ sense-making and decision-making processes results from interactions with them, and the ways that the Chinese and foreign co-principal interacted with some of the groups appeared at times to be different.

From a CELLS perspective (Hawkins & James, 2017), the complexity of both the dual-culture co-principalship and the school that they lead and manage would increase due to several dimensions: the heterogeneity of the interactors (the co-principals and the different groups were heterogeneous); the number of interactors (the co-principals and a number of different groups interacted); the interactions are a range of kinds (there was variety in the interactions between the co-principals and the groups); interactions are motivational and intentional (the different groups appeared to have their own priorities); feedback is an aspect of interactions (the groups provided feedback to the co-principals and vice-versa); interactions change those interacting (the co-principals at times influenced the different groups and vice-versa).

Also from a CELLS perspective, a variety of consequences of the dimensions and interactions appeared to result from the (arguably) increased complexity of the international school led by dual-culture co-principals: interrelationships develop through interaction (the co-principals developed relationships with the different groups); patterns of interaction develop (the co-principals described interactional behaviours of the different groups); there is capacity for self-organization (the co-principals described different groups forming in the school community as a result of a significant incident).

While some Chinese co-principals shared that they were more familiar with the different groups within their school community than the foreign co-principal due to their longer tenure at the school, language was also a significant factor in the interactions of the co-principals and the different groups within their school community.

The Chinese co-principal more often manages the challenges presented by Chinese and Asian parents

The Chinese and Asian parent communities (or groups) on the international school campuses visited, possibly ‘small cultures’ (Holliday, 1999), were mentioned in many of the interviews conducted with the dual-culture co-principals. Foreign and Chinese co-principals shared that the Chinese co-principal was the principal more often to meet and resolve issues with Chinese and Asian parents. It was evident from interviews that possible reasons for this related to language, culture, and familiarity.

Co-principals shared that the Chinese co-principal is sometimes more able to placate the Chinese and Asian parents in their schools, and meetings with parents often highlighted the important role the Chinese co-principal had with respect to sense-making processes and resolving matters with Chinese and Asian parents. Please see Appendix 4 for related quotations from co-principals.

Planning and preparing for decisions and communications

Before the co-principals made their decisions, they needed to consider differences in the norms and cultures of the different groups involved in or impacted by an incident, as well as the impact of their decisions on these different groups - the same decision may have had a different impact on these different groups. The co-principals also considered how best to communicate their decision to these groups, and they needed to anticipate how their decisions would be interpreted and received, with the hoped-for result being that the decision would be one that would be received as well as possible and understood by all. Comments made by co-principals suggest that in some cases there may have been differences between the foreign and Chinese co-principals as to their interpretations and understandings of how individuals or groups would receive a decision i.e. the interpretation or acceptability of the decision they were preparing to make.

Resolving matters successfully often appeared to be the result of the co-principals' awareness of the behaviours and characteristics of the different groups involved in the incidents discussed and the co-principals' adoption of strategies in managing these different groups during their decision-making processes. Please see Appendix 4 for related quotations from co-principals.

Impact of external groups on decision-making

While there were only a few comments from co-principals describing influences in their sense-making and decision-making processes by individuals and/or groups external to their school community, the impact of these influences was significant enough that at times their sense-making processes were influenced and/or decisions surrounding incidents modified.

External groups such as boards of directors and superintendents were also involved in the sense-making and decision-making processes, but to a very limited extent. Other external 'groups' that on occasion had an impact on the decision-making processes of dual-culture co-principals in the context of international schools in China, particularly for the 'Type C' schools, were the Ministry of Education and the China Communist Party (CCP).

From a CELLS perspective (Hawkins & James, 2017), the addition of interactors external to the school would seem to add to the complexity of the school.

Existence of a co-principals + business manager decision-making team in some schools

Some of the international schools visited operated using a 'senior leadership team' leadership model which included a 'business manager' (or 'general manager'), a member of staff at the same organizational level as (on equal standing with) the co-principals. This 'senior leadership

team' (or "*triumvirate*", as one co-principal jokingly remarked) would meet to discuss many significant incidents on their campus and would together make sense of issues and make decisions.

The 'chemistry' and make-up of this 'senior leadership team' would be factors to consider with respect to the sense-making and decision-making processes of this team. As mentioned previously, one co-principal stated that making decisions on significant matters with the business manager added an extra layer of protection for the co-principals. Bunnell (2008) had reported 'a risk reducing arrangement' as a benefit of the co-principalship of his study - the business manager may reduce risk further. In most cases, it appeared that the business manager, a Chinese citizen, would be the school's main contact with local government officials and would deal with significant community issues. It is possible that the business manager in these schools would play a significant role in shielding the co-principals from community issues, thus allowing the co-principals to focus more on the operations of the academic programme.

I discussed in Section 5.2.2 aspects of the co-principal relationship and the possible impact of the relationship on their sense-making and decision-making processes. The addition of a third person to the leadership team would seem to introduce greater complexity to their relationship and these processes. Co-principals commented on the additional time needed for the three individuals to learn how best to work with each other and to make decisions on matters.

Decision-making processes sometimes includes others

Perhaps evident to anyone who works in a school, some co-principals shared that at times there were other members of staff who were also involved with making decisions, even on significant matters. Terms like 'collaborative' and 'distributed' were used by some co-principals to describe the decision-making processes that took place on their campuses. In addition to the business manager (described above), teachers, middle managers, and vice-principals were sometimes involved in decision-making.

The concept of distributed leadership was discussed in Section 2.5.5. Bunnell (2008) had claimed that the co-principalship itself was an example of distributed leadership. Although it was not the aim of this project to explore the extent to which the co-principalship exhibited distributed leadership properties, the relationship between distributed leadership, power and authority was reviewed in Section 2.5.5 (Woods, 2016), and the impact of power and authority on the dual-culture co-principalship will be discussed in Theme 5 (Section 5.3.5).

Theme 4 and institutional theory

Normative pillar - Activities

The various activities that act as a carrier of the normative pillar include organizational roles, jobs, tasks and habitual/routine ways of operating especially collectively (Bunnell et al, 2016c).

The legitimacy of the dual-culture co-principalship leadership model would seem to depend on the acceptance and understanding of this leadership model by all school stakeholders. It would also seem to depend on the alignment of the vision for this model between those that created it (the organization), live it (the co-principals) and experience it (the various groups in the school community). It was evident from discussions of significant incidents that this alignment was sometimes lacking.

The interactions between the two co-principals and the different groups in their school community were at times not habitual nor predictable e.g. different groups in the school community would at times interact differently with the Chinese and foreign co-principals, and the Chinese co-principal more often managed challenges presented by Chinese and Asian parents. The “conceptions of appropriate goals and activities for particular individuals or specified social positions...normative expectations - regarding how specified actors are supposed to behave” (Scott, 2014, p. 64) is something to consider here. In the ‘minds’ of the different groups in their school community, do the co-principals have different roles?

The activities carrier of the normative pillar reveals in this theme that the legitimacy of international schools that use the dual-culture co-principal leadership model may weaken depending on the extent to which the different groups in the school community interact differently with the two co-principals, due to culture, norms and/or language.

Cultural-cognitive pillar - Symbolic systems

The symbolic systems carrier of the cultural-cognitive pillar is concerned with shared conceptions of the nature of reality and common sense-making, is symbolic in nature, and relates to categories, classifications, groupings, schemas, frameworks and models (Bunnell et al, 2016c).

Differences in meanings and understandings were evident through discussions of interactions between the co-principals and the different groups on their campus. The symbolic systems carrier of the cultural-cognitive pillar serves to illustrate that the extent to which the co-principals and the groups in their school community have *different* “conceptions of the nature

of reality” (Bunnell et al, 2016c, p. 11). Thus, it is possible that such incongruencies could impact the legitimacy of the international schools using this leadership model.

Cultural-cognitive pillar - Relational systems

The relational systems carrier of the cultural–cognitive pillar relates to the extent to which the relational systems within the institution conform to those in other similar institutions, and the extent to which the institution has a broadly similar identity to other comparable institutions (Bunnell et al, 2016c).

As discussed in Theme 2, the dual-culture co-principals would need to share ideas and concepts in a relational network that involves, as the evidence showed, their own relationship. However, they would also need to share ideas and concepts in a relational network that involves relationships with the different groups and other individuals in their school community (e.g. Chinese and Asian parents, Chinese teachers, foreign teachers, and Chinese support staff, ‘business manager’).

Again, if one considers the extent to which the international schools operating with a dual-culture co-principalship have a different identity to other comparable schools with solo principals (Bunnell et al, 2016c), the legitimacy of these international schools may be questionable.

Cultural-cognitive pillar - Activities

The activities carrier of the cultural–cognitive pillar relates to tendencies, inclinations and dominant modes, logics and discourse (Bunnell et al, 2016c).

In Theme 3, I described the interactions of dual-culture co-principals with respect to their need to work through differences in cultural and conceptual understandings in the context of their international school in China. Co-principals appeared to be faced with ongoing, daily attempts made at developing personal understandings and meanings, working towards shared understandings (i.e. being ‘on the same page’), navigating through meetings which were at times in either Chinese or English, and implementing strategies for dealing with parents or teacher groups.

A dual-culture co-principal experiences interactions with the different groups in their school community, and these interactions were varied and complex; at times, these groups interacted differently with the individual co-principals on a given issue. Planning and preparing for decisions and communications with these different groups were impacted by considerations of the culture, norms and language of these different groups.

The activities carrier of the cultural-cognitive pillar highlights possible inconsistencies in the ‘activities’ experienced by the dual-culture co-principals as they work with the different groups on their campus. Such inconsistencies may not be found in other schools that are led and managed by a solo principal, where one person is tasked with interacting with the different groups in the school community.

Theme summary

The school communities in which the dual-culture co-principals work are comprised of groups that appeared to impact on the sense-making and decision-making processes of the co-principals. Evidence suggested that at times: i) the co-principals as a team interacted differently with different groups, ii) the individual co-principals interacted differently with these groups, and iii) these groups interacted differently with the co-principals. Chinese and foreign teacher groups and Chinese/Asian parent groups appeared to be the more significant groups in the school community with respect to the frequency of these interactions and the influences on the sense-making processes leading up to decisions made by the co-principals.

While both co-principals at the international schools visited would be willing to meet and work with all parents in their community (all but one Chinese co-principal were proficient in English), the Chinese co-principal appeared to play a more important role with respect to the Chinese/Asian parent community, a very large demographic of the parent communities at the international schools visited, particularly the ‘Type C’ international schools. For both linguistic and cultural reasons, the Chinese co-principal often supported the foreign co-principal when dealing with these different groups (e.g. with translation, establishing shared understandings, and acting as a ‘cultural filter’). The Chinese co-principal also served, as one co-principal stated, as a ‘bridge’ between the different groups in the school community.

The presence of a business manager in some of the schools visited was an unexpected consideration for this research enquiry. This key member of staff, a member of the senior leadership team at these schools, would no doubt have an impact on sense-making and decision-making processes. Not only was the business manager involved in the interpretive processes for significant issues, the presence and work of these individuals may have served to both distribute decision-making as well as ‘free up’ the co-principals to focus on more academic matters.

There was much evidence to suggest the possibility that the sense-making and decision-making processes of the dual-culture co-principals were impacted and influenced by groups in their

school communities, and the legitimacy of schools using this leadership model would appear to be impacted by the interactions between the co-principals and these groups.

From a CELLS perspective of schools (Hawkins & James, 2017), the *interactions* between the co-principals and between the co-principals and the different groups in their school communities as well as the *consequences* of these interactions add to the complexity of these international schools. In addition, interactions between the co-principals and between the co-principals and the different groups may be conditioned by the interpretations of the school's institutional primary task by the co-principals and these different groups. Varying interpretations, therefore, may impact the legitimacy of international schools using the dual-culture co-principalship leadership model.

In the next section, I discuss the fifth and final theme, "Power and authority structures within the co-principalship".

5.2.5 Theme 5: Power and authority structures within the co-principalship

Theme summary

This final theme is not a significant one relative to the other four themes, for the categories contained within it were relatively smaller (in terms of the quantity of Level 1 codes) compared with many categories in the other themes. However, after a review of all the categories and a reflection of comments made by some co-principals, I decided to create this theme to reflect the possibility that power and authority structures within the co-principalship may impact on the sense-making and decision-making processes of the co-principals and the legitimacy of international schools using this leadership model. Among several questions about the possible impact of power on the co-principals' sense-making and decision-making processes, two questions provided me with added motivation to create this theme: Are the co-principals at the same level of authority in their school's structure and within their school's organization? Does their relative level of authority impact their sense-making and decision-making processes?

Power

This category only included feedback and incidents at one of the schools visited, and I had considered not including it in any theme. However, although it may be insignificant in terms of contributions from other co-principals, in combination with several other categories (see below) it is a category that may be considered as an important component of this power and authority theme. As discussed in Section 2.5.4, the sharing of power has been an observed challenge in some co-principalships (Eckman, 2006, 2007), and in Sections 2.5.5 and 2.5.6, I

briefly described (respectively) Woods' (2016) call for a greater understanding of the sharing of power in distributed leadership configurations and Cunningham's (2014) research into the relationship between leadership, distributed leadership and power.

From a CELLS perspective of schools (Hawkins & James, 2017), one interactional dimension is of relevance here: interactions are motivated and intentional. While it is noted that the notion of intention is problematic (Holland, 2014), if through their interactions the dual-culture co-principals were motivated to exercise their individual intentions, the complexity of this leadership model would seem to increase.

While I am unable to provide details (for reasons of maintaining the anonymity of participants), I note that at one of the campuses visited there appeared to be tension between the two co-principals (as evidenced through the interviews), and this tension appeared to be related to issues of power, control and trust. I also note that the co-principals at this school had at some point in their relationship agreed to lead and manage different divisions of their campus in a manner similar to the 'task-specialized' (or 'split-task' dual leadership) co-principalships described in Section 2.5.3.

The Chinese co-principal is the principal in authority

At some of the schools visited (i.e. the 'Type C' international schools described in Section 2.8.2), the Chinese co-principal would *typically* be the 法人代表 ('fa ren dai biao', or 'legal representative') for the school campus and the individual ultimately responsible for all that occurs on the campus. I suggest, therefore, that s/he may be more sensitive to the ramifications of decisions made - the foreign co-principal on these campuses may not experience this pressure to the same degree. In the past, the Chinese co-principal (and 'legal representative') at these schools did not necessarily need to be a member of the China Communist Party (CCP), but the increasing involvement of the CCP in matters related to education has apparently caused this network of the 'Type C' international schools (of which several campuses were visited for this thesis project) to fill Chinese co-principal positions with CCP members.

Foreign co-principals at two of these schools had expressed in interviews that the Chinese co-principal at their campus was the principal with the 'real' authority, and they shared that acknowledging this to themselves and to their partner helped pave the way for a more positive co-principal relationship.

Existence of a business manager and co-principal decision-making team in some schools

This category was also placed in Theme 4, “Groups and other individuals in the school community”. I placed this category in this theme also as it relates to authority structures at the ‘Type A’ international schools visited (see Section 2.8.2). The ‘business manager’ (or ‘general manager’) at these schools was a key member of staff (a Chinese citizen) at the same organizational level as (on equal standing with) the co-principals.

Personal priorities and agendas

This relatively small category was included in Theme 1 - “The principal and what s/he brings to the co-principalship”. I also placed it in this theme due to its possible relevance to the potential desire of a co-principal to exercise authority to achieve his/her priorities and agendas. It was quite evident from interviews with a co-principal at one of the schools visited that there were times when one of the co-principals attempted to exercise authority to achieve certain ends (in regards to enrolment, curriculum, resources, and the overall vision for their campus). This aspect of one of the co-principalships of this enquiry was described above in the “Power” category.

This particular category also relates to another category discussed previously, “Development of personal strategies” (Theme 1), in that some co-principals shared that they had developed methods of optimizing chances for success in convincing their co-principal partner to agree to some initiative.

Theme 5 and institutional theory

Regulative pillar - Relational systems

The relational systems carrier of the regulative pillar includes systems of institutional governance, governance interactions and the power dynamics within those systems (Bunnell et al, 2016c).

Only on one of the campuses visited was there a noticeable tension between the co-principals, and I suggest this tension related to power dynamics. These dynamics appeared to create a co-principalship that effectively resulted in the principals leading and managing two different divisions of the school - there was, eventually, little interaction between the two co-principals. The presence or absence of a power dynamic between the co-principals, as shown by the expectations of the relational systems carrier of the regulative pillar, would seem to impact the legitimacy of this leadership model as well as their ability to carry out their school’s institutional primary task.

Regulative pillar - Artefacts

Artefacts that carry the regulative pillar of institutionalization include objects that comply with and show compliance with legal/regulatory requirements (Bunnell et al, 2016c).

I had described earlier in this theme that at some of the international schools visited ('Type C' international schools) the Chinese co-principal *typically* was the 'legal representative', or 法人代表 ('fa ren dai biao'), for the campus (there will be exceptions, though). This co-principal would need to manage the processes and documentation related to adherence to local and national laws (e.g. education, safety, facilities) - important and sometimes challenging tasks. Bunnell et al (2016c) state that "as with the other carriers of this pillar, the use of artefacts to carry this pillar may be demanding - especially for a Type C International School" (p 10).

Considering this carrier of the regulative pillar, then, a dual-culture co-principalship in which only one of the co-principals would be responsible for adherence to local and national requirements (at, for example, 'Type C' international schools) would seem to create a leadership model where only the Chinese co-principal (as 'legal representative') and not the co-principal *pair* would be legitimate in the eyes of the local authorities.

It is not clear if these regulative and responsibility imbalances would impact the dual-culture co-principals' work at carrying out their institution's primary task.

Normative pillar - Relational systems

For the normative pillar, relational systems that act as a carrier include: the institution's authority structure, the way authority-based relationships work to ensure compliance to norms, the legitimacy of the power of those within that structure, and the institution's accountability structure (Bunnell et al, 2016c).

On some of the international school campuses visited, foreign co-principals shared that the Chinese co-principal was the principal with the 'real' authority - these comments may have been related to the Chinese co-principal's responsibility as 'legal representative' for their campus as described earlier. "When coercive power is both supported and constrained by rules, we move into the realm of authority" (Scott, 2014, p. 61). The extent to which the regulative 'power' of the Chinese co-principal was exercised by the Chinese co-principal and recognized/respected by the foreign co-principal and the school community would seem to influence the nature of the "co-" in the co-principalship (from the perspectives of both the foreign co-principal and the school community) and therefore the ability of the co-principals to secure legitimacy for their school.

Theme summary

This theme encompassed the concepts of both power and authority as well as categories related to the existence of a third party to the sense-making and decision-making group (i.e. co-principals + business manager), personal priorities and agendas, and strategies used by some co-principals to achieve certain ends.

Due to the relatively smaller quantity of data collected in these categories, I do not suggest that there any generalizable relationships between the concepts of power, authority and the sense-making and decision-making processes of the dual-culture co-principals - further research would be needed to confirm any relationships. However, the limited data collected through my interviews suggested that the relative authority of the dual-culture co-principals was not equal in some of the schools visited - power and authority differentials appeared to exist, and these imbalances appeared to impact the sense-making and decision-making processes of one particular co-principal pair. The relationship between power, leadership and distributed leadership was touched upon in Sections 2.5.5 and 2.5.6. The interview data raised questions about power and the ‘influence potential’ of the individual co-principals (see Krausz, 1986); the leadership and decision-making structures that exist at the international schools visited may be impacted by how power is legitimized and the ensuing authority structures produced (see Woods, 2016). Does an imbalance of power and authority impact on the co-principals’ decision-making?

If the Chinese co-principal holds the title of 法人代表 (‘legal representative’) and the authority that comes along with the title, is the co-principal relationship and their decision-making impacted? The existence of a business manager at some of the schools visited may also impact on the authority structures of the two co-principals. Is it possible that removing some authority from the dual-culture co-principalship (e.g. by having a different individual be the ‘legal representative’, or distributing the authority across three individuals) impacts the co-principal relationship (see Section 5.2.3) and their decision-making processes? Co-principals at international schools 3 through 9, all ‘Type A’ international schools, communicated that they enjoyed a very equal standing with their partner.

Regrettably, I did not pursue a deeper understanding the of the extent to which individual principals bring their personal priorities and agendas to the co-principalship. However, it does appear from the interview data that some co-principals developed strategies to increase their chances of success at achieving personal work goals through their existing authority structures.

It appears evident from the pillars and carriers discussed that the legitimacy of schools using this leadership model could be weakened due to the power dynamics, authority structures, and personal agendas and priorities within the co-principalship. Reviewing this theme from a CELLS perspective of schools would seem to suggest that power dynamics and authority structures within dual-culture co-principalships would increase the complexity of this leadership model and decrease the co-principals' ability to carry out their school's institutional primary task.

The five emerged themes provided a foundation and resource from which, to some extent, answered the research questions and served to achieve the aim for this enquiry. In the next section, I review the three research questions, provide and discuss answers to them, and summarize the extent to which I have achieved the aim for this enquiry.

5.3 Research questions

The aim of this study was to analyze the leadership and management of dual-culture co-principals in international schools in China, and I attempted to achieve this aim through an analysis of their sense-making and decision-making processes using a critical incident method and thematic analysis. Three research questions were used to guide the interview and analysis stages in order to achieve the aim for this enquiry:

- 1. How do dual-culture co-principals from different cultures and with experiences from different contexts interpret organizational matters?*
- 2. What factors influence how dual-culture co-principals from different cultures and with experiences from different contexts interpret organizational matters?*
- 3. How do the dual-culture co-principals come to agree on (make decisions on) organizational matters?*

Semi-structured and unstructured interviews (Van Teijlingen, 2014) conducted with twenty dual-culture co-principals in ten international schools resulted in the emergence of five main themes. Each of the emerged themes helped to provide some understanding of how dual-culture co-principals make sense of (interpret) matters, what factors influence their interpretations, and how they come to agree (make decisions) on matters. Each of the three research questions will now be answered, followed by a summary of the extent to which the aim of this enquiry has been achieved.

How do dual-culture co-principals from different cultures and with experiences from different contexts interpret organizational matters?

It was evident through discussions of significant incidents that co-principals drew on their personal prior knowledge and experience, norms, values, and culture when faced with the need to interpret and make sense of matters. Making sense of matters, however, involved interactions between the two co-principals as well as those between the co-principals and other groups and individuals (e.g. the ‘business manager’) in the school community. These interactions opened channels of input through which the prior knowledge, experience, norms, values and culture of the co-principals, these groups and individuals contributed to sense-making processes, and shared meanings and understandings were developed (or attempted) through these interactions. For one co-principalship, a translator was used by co-principals to bridge their language barrier, and one co-principal team typically used a translator during meetings with Chinese parents. When interacting with Chinese/Asian parents or parent groups during sense-making processes, the Chinese co-principal often played a larger role in managing cultural and language differences.

Establishing practices and protocols helped several co-principals make their way successfully through the sense-making/interpretive phases of significant incidents; having shared goals was helpful for many of the co-principals with respect to establishing shared interpretations and understandings on matters.

What factors influence how dual-culture co-principals from different cultures and with experiences from different contexts interpret organizational matters?

As revealed through the emerged themes, a variety of factors appeared to influence the dual-culture co-principals’ interpretation of organizational matters. The individual principal brings their personality, intercultural competency, knowledge, experience, culture, norms, values, and personal priorities and agendas to the co-principalship, and these aspects of the individual appeared to have an influence on sense-making and decision-making processes. Generally, the Chinese co-principal’s leadership and management experiences would come from local and international school contexts in China, while the foreign co-principal’s leadership and management experience would have come from foreign contexts (international schools in other countries or domestic education systems in their home country). The degree to which the co-principals (and particularly the foreign co-principal who may be new to the role and context), were able to consider other perspectives and make sense of matters together with their partner appeared to have a large impact on their success at working through the sense-making processes leading to decisions.

Once the individual principal has arrived at the co-principalship, the co-principal relationship begins and evidently has a significant influence on the co-principals' ability to come together, interpret issues and make decisions. Many of the Chinese co-principals had worked in their international school for many years, having experienced several foreign co-principal partners. For many of the foreign co-principals, their co-principalship was their first shared leadership role, and for some, their first time leading and managing a school in China or first time leading and managing a school in a different country. Many of the Chinese and foreign co-principals communicated that, with time, the foreign co-principal had 'learned along the way' – the longer the time they spent in the relationship and school appeared to positively influence the foreign co-principal's ability to work through cultural differences and the challenges that come along with the shared leadership model and international school in China context. During the building of the relationship, co-principals (and particularly foreign co-principals as communicated through interviews) appeared to move through ego developmental stages similar to those described in Adult Ego Development (AED) literature (Carr et al, 2018).

Co-principals' interpretations of issues surrounding incidents were influenced by each other's prior knowledge and experience, norms, values, and culture. According to co-principals, there appeared to be cultural differences in the way that both Chinese and foreign co-principals approached conversations on significant matters - these differences, for example, related to the degree to which one is direct in communicating opinions and thoughts. In addition to the need for a period of time to build the co-principal relationship and to create shared practices and protocols, establishing and maintaining trust appeared to be crucial for this leadership model. The degree of intimacy of the relationship, the co-principals' sensitivity towards each other, and the extent to which the co-principals relied on each other were also important factors influencing their ability to work through interpretive processes.

Navigating through differences in meanings and conceptual understandings seemed to be a common aspect of the co-principals' daily routines and management of significant matters. These differences appeared to be linked to culture, norms, cognition, organizational culture and other factors such as Chinese/English language proficiency. While it was apparent that co-principals held perceptions and assumptions of cultural differences, it was evident that many of the differences in meanings and understandings that arose during sense-making processes were attributed to culture. Co-principals with a higher degree of intercultural competency (Gudykunst, 2003) appeared to fair better in their role, the co-principal relationship, and their international school context; as previously mentioned, co-principal teams that maintained practices and protocols at establishing shared understandings appeared to navigate through discussions of significant matters more successfully.

The impact of different groups in the school community (e.g. teacher and parent groups) on the co-principals' interpretive and decision-making processes, more significant than anticipated, emerged during the interviews and thematic analysis. Experiencing differences in meanings, conceptual understandings and culture was not limited to interactions between the co-principals themselves but extended to interactions between different groups (or 'small cultures' (Holliday, 1999)) in their school community, and these differences were at times significant. Although not always the case, the Chinese co-principal evidently played a more significant role with respect to interactions with (and managing significant matters that arose within) the Chinese/Asian parent community on campus, for both cultural and linguistic reasons. The presence of a third sense-making and decision-making partner at some schools, the 'business manager', was also not anticipated before commencing this enquiry. The impact of these groups (or 'small cultures') and individuals on the co-principals' sense-making and decision-making processes could be explored further; my suggestion for future research would be to expand the unit of analysis to include these groups and individuals, and perhaps include surveys and focus group discussions in addition to interviews.

The influence of power dynamics (Cunningham, 2014) and authority structures on the co-principalship, while not a significant theme in this research enquiry, appeared to play an important part in influencing the sense-making and decision-making processes for one co-principalship. Differences in the leadership authority structures within co-principal pairs across the ten international schools visited were evident - the influence of power dynamics and authority structures on co-principalships is of particular relevance to dual-culture co-principalships and should also be explored further. In China, the potential need for a Chinese co-principal to take on the role of 法人代表 ('fa ren dai biao', or 'legal representative') for their school may influence the dynamics within and sense-making/decision-making processes of the co-principalship.

Finally, the lack of formal induction into the co-principalship and/or training for this shared leadership role was a notable observation across all of the co-principals interviewed – only a few of the co-principals surveyed had received some initial, informal training.

How do the dual-culture co-principals come to agree on (make decisions on) organizational matters?

Decisions made by co-principals on significant matters were made *primarily* as a result of their discussions and interactions, and, at some international schools, they would make these decisions with a 'business manager' as a 'senior leadership team'. For some cases, co-

principals encouraged decisions on significant matters to be made in collaboration with others e.g. vice-principals and teachers.

The need for time to work through the decision-making process was a comment shared by many co-principals. It was not my intention to learn how quickly co-principals made decisions, but interviews revealed that for some matters, discussions leading to decisions occurred over a period of weeks, even when involving only the co-principals - in many cases, co-principals were able to come together and make decisions without difficulty, but in some cases, co-principals had to re-visit the topic again and again until an agreement could be reached. Some co-principals had shared that they had developed personal strategies to improve their chances of success in reaching a desired outcome on a decision with their partner.

As with the co-principals' sense-making/interpretive processes, the development of practices and protocols appeared to help co-principals reach decisions e.g. discussing and agreeing on a common/shared goal or aim. Establishing clear roles - i.e. avoiding role ambiguity (Pettegrew & Wolf, 1982) - was also an important factor for the co-principal relationship and for the co-principals' decision-making processes.

As mentioned in the first research question above, co-principals did not make decisions in isolation – input from the 'business manager', individuals and groups ('small cultures') in the school community, and sometimes individuals and groups external to the school community (superintendent, boards of directors, local officials and the government) was used to inform their decisions.

Planning and preparing for decisions and for the communication of these decisions appeared to impact the co-principals' interpretive and decision-making processes. Co-principals shared that it was important to 'be on the same page' to reflect unity in decisions, and there was a need for co-principals to consider how a decision would be received by individuals or groups – these considerations (often cultural considerations) appeared at times to impact both decision-making processes and the decisions made.

At times, decisions were made by one co-principal - a high level of trust between the co-principals allowed for this to occur. With one co-principalship, where trust was lost and the co-principals led and managed separate divisions of the school, making independent decisions on matters was the 'status quo'.

Power and authority structures and dynamics within the co-principalship may have impacted co-principals' decision-making processes, and some co-principals appeared to have personal priorities and agendas which may have had an impact on decisions made. As with the first

research question above with respect to the co-principals' sense-making processes, the impact of power and authority structures on the co-principals' decision-making processes should be explored further. Finally, a lack of training and guidance may have had an impact on co-principals' decision-making processes – it would seem reasonable to suggest that some form of training and guidance for dual-culture co-principals would provide them with a foundation for learning how to successfully come together to make decisions on matters, from trivial to significant in nature.

5.4 Research aim

The aim of this study was to analyze the leadership and management of dual-culture co-principals in international schools in China, and I attempted to accomplish this aim through an analysis of their sense-making and decision-making processes using a critical incident method and thematic analysis.

The emerged themes and answers to the three research questions served to provide insights into how dual-culture co-principals from different cultures and with experiences from different contexts interpret organizational matters, what factors influence how they interpret organizational matters, and how they come together to make decisions on organizational matters. However, this research also revealed several limitations of this study and the need for more research of dual-culture co-principalships operating in international schools in China. These limitations and suggestions for future research will be provided in Chapter 6.

It was also my hope through this enquiry, by gaining a better understanding of the leadership and management provided by dual-culture co-principals in international schools in China, to learn something of their ability to secure legitimacy for their international schools. In the next two sections, I discuss the findings of this enquiry related to this understanding. A discussion of the co-principals' responses regarding their international schools' institutional primary task now follows - as stated in Section 2.10, for an institution to be a legitimate institution, it must have an institutional primary task...“the task that it must perform to survive” (Rice, 1963, p. 13).

5.5 Institutional primary task

Bunnell et al (2016b) state that the institutional task is “what the members of the institution must work on if their institutional work is to be legitimate” (p 6), and I had mentioned previously, for example, the authors' suggestion that the institutional primary task of an international school should be the provision of an ‘international curriculum’.

It seems reasonable to suggest that it would be vital for two individuals tasked with leading and managing an international school to ‘be on the same page’ with respect to their combined leadership and management of their school towards its institutional primary task. Yet, a review of the co-principals’ responses (see Section 4.6) revealed a wide range of statements and concepts amongst the twenty dual-culture co-principals and across all ten schools visited. While all responses were noble and related to educational concepts that could be found in the literature and promotional material from international schools anywhere around the globe, the inconsistent nature of the dual-culture co-principal’s responses, even within one co-principal pair, was perhaps not surprising. For two individuals to have developed identical or similar statements about their institutional primary task, they would have needed to have discussed this concept - in terms relevant to their context e.g. vision, mission, philosophy, ethos - and agreed upon a common, shared understanding of it.

Bunnell et al (2016c) state that the symbolic systems carrier of the cultural–cognitive pillar is “concerned with shared conceptions of the nature of reality and common sense-making” (p 11) and relates to categories, classifications, groupings, schemas, frameworks and models. The school’s institutional primary task would seem to be a key part of the ‘symbolic system’ for both co-principals and their school community. The inconsistency in the co-principals’ responses raises a concern in that if the primary task is what an institution must do in order to survive, their differing interpretations of their school’s primary task would appear to adversely impact the legitimacy of the school they are leading and managing (Hawkins & James, 2017).

Bunnell et al (2016b, 2016c) claim that the institutional primary task conditions the *interactions* that take place in a school (see Section 2.11). From a CELLS perspective, given that the “legitimacy of interactions is important and will play a significant part in institutionalization” (Hawkins & James (2017, p 9), citing: Bunnell et al, 2016b, 2016c), the differing conceptions of the co-principals regarding their schools’ primary task would seem to increase the complexity of the institution, raise questions about whether or not a shared understanding of the school’s primary task in the school community existed, and provide challenges to co-principals in securing legitimacy for their school. Further research would need to be conducted to determine the extent to which these differing views condition the interactions of the co-principals and others in the school community (Bunnell et al, 2016b, 2016c).

5.6 Dual-culture co-principals, international schools and legitimacy

A review of the emerged themes using the regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive pillars and institutionalizing carriers of Scott’s (2014) institutional theory framework provided a range of potential influences on the legitimacy of international schools using this leadership model.

Considerations of schools as CELLS also furnished, for some aspects of the emerged themes, additional insights into possible influences on legitimacy.

The regulative pillar of Scott's (2014) institutional theory framework involves the capacity to establish rules, inspect or review others' conformity to them, and direct sanctions, rewards or punishments in an attempt to influence future behaviour (Section 2.10). These rules have "an instrumental rationale and are legally sanctioned, which is the basis for their legitimacy" (Bunnell et al, 2016a, p. 7). Examining the emerged themes from the perspective of the regulative pillar revealed that power dynamics and authority structures within the co-principalship and school community may adversely impact the ability to secure legitimacy, as power and authority issues within one co-principalship appeared to significantly impact their decision-making processes (see Woods, 2016). The degree to which co-principals exercise their 'influence potential' may also influence their ability to carry out their school's institutional primary task.

The extent to which the regulative 'power' of the Chinese co-principal was exercised by the Chinese co-principal and recognized/respected by the foreign co-principal and the school community would seem to influence the ability of the co-principals to secure legitimacy for their school. Securing legitimacy may be further challenged at those schools where the Chinese co-principal was the 'legal representative', or 法人代表 ('fa ren dai biao'), for the campus - the co-principalship at these schools would not be considered a *legal* leadership model by the external community (government) or may not be 'seen' (experienced) as a 'co-' leadership model within the school community.

The normative pillar comprises values and norms. Values are notions of the preferred/desirable and standards against which enable existing structures and behaviours can be compared (Scott, 2014), and norms specify practices deemed to be legitimate ways of pursuing valued outcomes (Bunnell et al, 2016a). Reviewing the emerged themes from the perspective of the regulative pillar emphasized the importance of an alignment of personal values, opinions, norms, and expectations of how a school should be led and managed; personal priorities and agendas, trust and maintaining expectations of each other were significant factors in the co-principals' relationship. Challenges to these aspects of the relationship, therefore, would negatively impact the co-principals' ability to secure legitimacy for their school. A lack of training for this shared leadership model, a model that would likely present new challenges for co-principals new to their role would also impact legitimacy, in that *role clarity* for each co-principal would be vital (i.e. to reduce role ambiguity). Some co-principals described shared practices and protocols that helped them with their sense-making and decision-making – a lack of these activities may

negatively impact co-principal's ability to achieve their school's primary task and thus weaken their ability to secure legitimacy for their school.

An acceptance and understanding of the dual-culture co-principalship role by all school stakeholders and those external to the school (e.g. other similar institutions), important for the normative pillar, was an issue that arose in discussions of significant incidents – it was observed that an alignment of the vision for this leadership model by the school's organization, the school community and co-principal was lacking for some co-principalships. Interactions between the co-principals and the different groups in their school communities were at times inconsistent e.g. the same group would interact differently with each of the co-principals due to culture, norms and/or language. The normative pillar also highlighted the diversity of responses from co-principals regarding the existence of, awareness of, or adherence to a job description for their role – this may represent a challenge for securing legitimacy in that having a shared understanding of the co-principal role would be vital.

The cultural-cognitive pillar is concerned with shared understandings of reality and sense-making schema which enable meaning-making and interpretation (Bunnell et al, 2016a), and is grounded in cultural theory (Douglas, 1982). A review of the emerged themes from the perspective of this pillar illustrated the importance of the compatibility of the co-principals – the impact of their individual personalities on the relationship was significant and may have impacted their ability to achieve their school's institutional primary task and secure legitimacy for their school. Co-principals need to be able to work towards this task and secure legitimacy by managing differences in norms, culture, taken-for-granted understandings (personal frames and schemas). Securing legitimacy would depend on the co-principals' ability to develop and communicate a shared understanding of the school's institutional primary task (as mentioned earlier) – this enquiry revealed a diverse range of responses in this regard.

Discussions of significant incidents showed that at times co-principals experienced challenges in developing shared understandings in general, managing differences in perceptions, assumptions, beliefs and socially established structures of meaning in processes and practices; navigating cultural differences between themselves, and between themselves and the different groups in their school community, provided further challenges to securing legitimacy, as institutional theory emphasizes the importance of shared categories, schema, frames and scripts (Section 2.11). Language ability differences, to different degrees, also impacted co-principals' leadership and management processes and should be considered as having an impact on legitimacy.

The relational nature of the dual-culture co-principalship does not appear to conform with leadership models in other similar institutions. An assessment of legitimacy should consider not only the relationship between the co-principals, but also between the individual co-principals and the different groups in the school communities. Through a variety of interactions, co-principals experienced opportunities to develop their personal understandings as they worked towards establishing *shared* understandings, and these opportunities sometimes presented challenges, as meetings with teachers or parents were in Chinese, English or both.

Some co-principals implemented strategies for managing issues, particularly when dealing with parent or teacher groups in their school communities. The activities carrier of the cultural-cognitive pillar highlighted possible inconsistencies in the ‘activities’ experienced by the dual-culture co-principals (e.g. meetings, conversations, messages) as they worked with the different groups on their campus. Planning and preparing for decisions and communications with these different groups were impacted by considerations of the culture, norms and language of these different groups.

A review of the literature on institutional legitimacy revealed the importance of the nature and type of *interactions* in schools (Hawkins & James, 2017). Taking a CELLS perspective of schools emphasized the different challenges placed on co-principals for securing legitimacy through a consideration of the interactions of the co-principals. As described in Section 2.12, the increased complexity of international schools (Fertig & James, 2016) presents more challenges to school leaders in securing legitimacy for their school. This legitimacy is impacted by several dimensions of the co-principals’ interactions: the ‘heterogeneity of interactors’, the ‘number of interactors’, ‘feedback’, and ‘interactions change those interacting’ (Hawkins & James, 2017). The additional interactions of a shared leadership configuration and the possibly differing ‘interactional capabilities’ of each co-principal adds complexity to this leadership model and the school, along with the historical conditioning of co-principals interactions due to their differing cultures and backgrounds, norms and values. The co-principals’ interactions are also shaped by their individual priorities, agendas, motivations and intentions.

The more opportunities the co-principals have to interact increases the complexity of this leadership model, thus providing another potential challenge to co-principals for securing legitimacy for their school should these interactions lead to instability rather than stability. In the context of the international schools in which these dual-culture co-principals lead and manage, this legitimacy is also impacted by their interactions with other individuals and groups in the school community. Thus, ‘interactions change those interacting’, ‘interrelationships develop through interaction’, ‘patterns of interaction develop’, and ‘capacity for self-organization’ (of the groups) are all important legitimacy considerations with respect to the

interactions the co-principals experience with the groups in their school community. The interactions (conversations, meetings, body language) of co-principals at times led to differences in meanings and understandings - their ability to manage cognitive and cultural differences between themselves and the groups in their school community through these interactions would be important for securing legitimacy for their international school.

5.7 Summary

In this chapter, a discussion of the five themes that had emerged from the thematic analysis of semi-structured and unstructured interview data was provided. The emerged themes and answers to three research questions have helped to inform a better understanding of the leadership and management of dual-culture co-principals in international schools in China.

The themes (and categories contained within them) also provided an understanding of the ability of dual-culture co-principals to secure legitimacy for their international school, when viewed through the perspective of Scott's (2014) institutional theory framework. The complex nature of international schools led and managed by dual-culture co-principals was also considered in assessing the co-principals' ability to secure legitimacy for their international school.

In the next and final chapter of this research enquiry, I provide the conclusions from this enquiry, discuss its limitations, and provide several implications from this research and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 6 – Conclusions, limitations, implications, recommendations

6.1 Introduction

In this final chapter, I describe the conclusions for this enquiry by providing a summary of the answers to the research questions and the extent to which the aim of this enquiry was achieved. I also furnish a summary of the findings with respect to the dual-culture co-principals' ability to secure legitimacy for their international schools in China. Several limitations of this enquiry and a range of implications for practice will then be described, followed by the provision of recommendations for future research. The chapter will close with some final thoughts.

6.2 Conclusions

The dual-culture co-principalship is a leadership model that is not well known globally by international school researchers and practitioners. This model is, however, being used in a small number of international schools in China. Since these schools operate in locations that arguably call for unique solutions to a variety of local challenges, it seems necessary to consider alternative leadership models for them, and the dual-culture co-principalship may indeed become an important such alternative in the future. Indeed, although the aim of this research enquiry was not to uncover any benefits or advantages of the dual-culture co-principalship, a variety of advantages were observed.

The aim of this grounded theory enquiry was to analyze the leadership and management of dual-culture co-principals in international schools in China, and this aim was attempted through an analysis of their sense-making and decision-making processes. Semi-structured and unstructured interviews of dual-culture co-principals working at ten international schools in China were conducted using a critical incident method. A thematic analysis of the interview data resulted in the emergence of five themes, which served to inform answers to three research questions and achieve, to some extent, the aim of this research enquiry.

Each emerged theme represents some form of influence on the sense-making and decision-making processes (and thus on the leadership and management) of dual-culture co-principals in international schools in China: “the principal and what s/he brings to the co-principalship”, “the co-principal relationship”, “the cultural and cognitive aspects of the co-principalship”, “groups and other individuals in the school community” and “power and authority structures within the co-principalship”.

Dual-culture co-principals make sense of matters through their own interactions as well as through those that occur between themselves and other individuals and the different groups ('small cultures') in their school community. They draw on their own prior knowledge, experience, norms, and values when interpreting issues, and their cultural backgrounds and experiences also appear to be important resources for these interpretive processes. The sharing of knowledge, experience, norms, values and culture that occurs during interactions between the co-principals and between the co-principals and the different groups in their school community influences the co-principals' interpretive processes, and these processes at times occurred over lengthy and multiple conversations. At times, due to Chinese and English language ability considerations, translators are used by co-principals to ensure shared understandings. Establishing practices and protocols, and having shared goals, tend to improve dual-culture co-principals' success at navigating through their sense-making and decision-making processes.

The individual co-principal brings their personality, culture, intercultural competency, knowledge and experience, norms, values, and personal priorities and agendas to the co-principalship, and their ability to consider other perspectives and make sense of matters together with a partner was an important factor when making sense of matters and making decisions – a co-principal's Adult Ego Development (AED) stage may have a bearing on this ability. The dual-culture co-principal relationship impacts the co-principals' sense-making processes to a high degree, and a lengthy period of time may be needed to build this relationship. Navigating through differences in meanings and conceptual understandings was a common aspect of the co-principals' daily routines and management of significant matters, and these differences appeared to be linked to culture, norms, cognition, organizational culture and other factors such as Chinese/English language proficiency. Establishing and maintaining trust, a high degree of intimacy in the working relationship, and shared practices and protocols appeared to be significant influences on the co-principal relationship.

The different groups ('small cultures') in the school community (e.g. teacher and parent groups) as well as other individuals (e.g. the 'business manager') appear to impact the co-principals' interpretive and decision-making processes to a large extent – experiencing differences in meanings, conceptual understandings and culture is not limited to interactions between the co-principals themselves, but between the co-principals and these groups and individuals. The Chinese co-principal appears to play a more important role in the international school communities visited with respect to interactions with Chinese/Asian parent groups and bridging cultural and language differences in the school community. Although a relatively smaller theme compared with the others that emerged in this study, power dynamics and authority structures

appear to be factors that influence the co-principals' interpretive and decision-making processes. A lack of formal induction and training for individuals new to a dual-culture co-principalship was a surprising and notable observation in this enquiry and should be addressed by schools using (or considering the use of) this leadership model.

Decisions made by co-principals on significant matters are made as a result of their discussions and interactions, and at some international schools visited, they make these decisions with a 'business manager' as a 'senior leadership team'. For some significant matters, time, and sometimes lengthy periods of time, are required to make decisions, as multiple discussions between the co-principals or between the co-principals and other individuals and groups in the school community need to occur. Some individual co-principals develop personal strategies to help improve their success in reaching a decision with their partner, and co-principals that establish clear roles as well as decision-making practices and protocols appear to be more successful with decision-making processes. Decisions at times appear to also be influenced by considerations of how the decisions will be received by the individuals and groups involved with the particular incidents. Thus, the *planning* processes regarding the communication of decisions appears to play a role in the decisions themselves.

The significant number and incredible growth rate of international schools in China along with the overall lack of accountability of many of these schools, particularly of the newer, '*non-traditional*' type, appears to have encouraged recent attempts to increase the level of scrutiny on them - securing their legitimacy may be one way of doing so.

A review of aspects of the emerged themes using the regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive pillars and institutionalizing carriers of Scott's (2014) institutional theory framework provided a range of potential influences on the ability of dual-culture co-principals to secure legitimacy for their international school, and a consideration of schools as complex, evolving, loosely linked systems (CELLS) provided additional insights into the possible influences on legitimacy.

A legitimate institution must have an institutional 'primary task' (Rice, 1963), and having a shared and common interpretation of the school's primary task helps to ensure legitimacy for both the primary task and the school (Hawkins & James, 2017). From the perspectives of institutional theory and complexity theory, dual-culture co-principals with differing interpretations of their school's primary task – and this was the case for most of the co-principal pairs interviewed - would experience challenges in securing legitimacy for their school.

The regulative pillar of Scott's (2014) institutional theory framework highlighted the impact of power dynamics and authority structures on the ability of co-principals to secure legitimacy for their international school, particularly with respect to their ability to carry out their school's institutional primary task. The normative pillar illustrated the importance of alignment in co-principals' personal values, opinions, norms, and expectations of how a school should be led and managed. Aspects of the co-principal relationship such as trust, professional intimacy, sensitivity, and role ambiguity also impacted their ability to lead and manage their school towards its primary task; shared practices and protocols served to help some co-principal pairs with these processes. The normative pillar also highlighted the importance of the acceptance and understanding of the dual-culture co-principalship by all school stakeholders, and differences in the nature of interactions between the individual co-principals and the different groups in their school community revealed another challenge for co-principals in securing legitimacy for their international school.

The cultural-cognitive pillar illustrated the importance of the compatibility of the co-principals, as they need to be able to manage differences in personal norms, values, culture, and taken-for-granted understandings (personal frames and schemas) in order to move their school toward its institutional primary task. In addition, co-principals at times experienced challenges in managing differences in perceptions, assumptions, beliefs and socially established structures of meaning in their school's processes and practices; navigating cultural differences between themselves, and between themselves and the different groups in their school community, provided further challenges to securing legitimacy. The relational nature of dual-culture co-principalship leadership model does not appear to conform with leadership models in other similar institutions, and interactions between the co-principals and the different groups in their school community adds to the challenges of securing legitimacy - the activities carrier of the cultural-cognitive pillar shows that inconsistencies in the ways that co-principals interact with these different groups negatively impacts, to some extent, the legitimacy of the school.

Finally, co-principals face additional challenges in securing legitimacy for their schools due to the complex nature of international schools (Fertig & James, 2016). Interactions occurring between co-principals and between the co-principals and the different groups in the school community result in increased complexity, increased potential for instability, and increased challenges for co-principals in leading and managing their international school toward its institutional primary task.

A presentation of several limitations of this enquiry is provided next.

6.3 Limitations of the enquiry

Admittedly, the scope of this enquiry - interviews of dual-culture co-principals at ten international schools - was limited. Individual interviews of twenty dual-culture co-principals and several combined co-principal interviews together did not represent a large pool of data, and the categories used to form the emergent themes were of unequal significance - some categories were comprised of contributions from many co-principals, and some very few. In addition, the unit of analysis for this enquiry was limited to the pair of dual-culture co-principals at each campus and thus did not include other individuals or groups in the school communities. Thus, the results of this research should be taken with caution.

This enquiry was purely qualitative in nature, and the results for the enquiry were based on a thematic analysis of interview transcripts. A mixed methods approach, or a qualitative survey of co-principals and/or other school stakeholders (i.e. teachers, parents), may have provided additional data from which results (i.e. categories, themes) could have been confirmed, revised or refuted.

Language was a limitation that must be considered - it was certainly a barrier for one of the co-principal interviews, but a translator present at the interview helped to alleviate challenges related to meanings and understandings in that interview. The Chinese co-principals at the remaining nine schools all had an excellent command of English.

Finally, my inexperience as an interviewer most certainly had an impact on the results - I suggest that with more experience I would have been able to identify issues or topics during the interviews for which I could have delved deeper for a better understanding of the co-principals' sense-making and decision-making processes and in turn their leadership and management.

I had mentioned in Section 1.2 ("Rationale for this enquiry") that it was my hope that this research could serve to inform others: those who wish to take on a dual-culture co-principal role; international schools who are currently using this leadership model; and schools that are considering the adoption of it. In the following section, I provide several implications for practice.

6.4 Implications for practice

Reflecting on what I have learned and experienced throughout the interviewing process and analysis stages, I became more motivated to somehow provide those educators entering (or considering entering) a dual-culture co-principal role with the findings from this paper, however limited and applicable the findings may be (see the previous section - "Limitations of the

enquiry”). One co-principal’s comments in particular stood out amongst other similar statements:

“Then I think more [about] reality, you know, [the] adjustment we made...you know, we can work together. We need, you know, [to] work out the model, [for] both of us [to be] comfortable and workable. So otherwise we will suffer from this [leadership] model, so I will say, you know, [the] sooner we have that adjustment, we can move to the performance stage. The performance stage will become more, you know, joyful and productive because we are more focused [on] (laughs) the enjoyment of work rather than, you know, how to work (laughs).”

Taking on a dual-culture co-principal role may be the first shared leadership role for a principal. For principals aiming to work in the schools visited for this enquiry, it also may be their first time leading and managing an international school, a school in a different country, or a school in a China context.

Given the incidents discussed throughout the interviews, the dual-culture co-principalship is a leadership model that would appear to have leadership and management benefits and advantages in a China context, particularly in Tier 2 and 3 cities where many international schools are ‘popping up’ (see Section 1.2). If all is working well in the co-principalship and the co-principals are able to work their way successfully through sense-making and decision-making processes given the challenges presented through the emerged themes from this enquiry, for anywhere from small to significant matters, they stand a *chance* at creating a leadership model that can lead a school toward its primary task in a school community that recognizes, accepts and appreciates their leadership and management model. Considering the co-principal’s statement above as well as the co-principalship that ended with each co-principal leading and managing separate divisions of a school with minimal interaction, it would seem that if a co-principal relationship were to be unsuccessful, both co-principals and the school community would indeed ‘suffer’.

The categories and themes that emerged from this enquiry suggest that attention be given by schools using this leadership model (or considering its use) to a range of considerations. First and foremost, a formalized training and induction programme for incoming and existing co-principals should be created and implemented at these schools. It is surprising that such assistance is not provided to principals, given the complexity and demands of the role in these international school contexts. Training and induction might involve components and activities that, for example, assist principals in developing/increasing intercultural competency, and help

to build the co-principal relationship (e.g. trust, intimacy, communication, sensitivity to each other).

Recruitment processes for co-principals could include not only questions about an individual's prior leadership and management experience (and the contexts within which the individual has worked i.e. domestic and international), but also components that help to gain an understanding of the principal's personality and Adult Ego Development (AED) stage. As suggested in the following section, though, more research would be needed to determine the impact and relationship of personality and the individual's AED stage on the co-principals' relationship, leadership and management.

Without an understanding of the perspectives that individuals and groups in the school community have of the dual-culture co-principals (please see the following section, "Recommendations for future research"), the following implication is based purely on speculation: Educating the school community about the dual-culture co-principalship may serve to not only help all school stakeholders understand the leadership model and interact with each co-principal more consistently, but also may increase its legitimacy in the school community.

At the time of this writing, this research enquiry was the only empirical study of dual-culture co-principals, and although the relative scope of this study was limited, it is hoped that the results of this research will serve to inform (and encourage) future research into this leadership model. As such, a range of recommendations for future research is provided in the following section.

6.5 Recommendations for future research

In the "Rationale for this enquiry" section (Section 1.2), I noted the paucity of research into leadership in international schools (Blandford & Shaw, 2001) and of the lack of research into educational leadership in Asia Pacific and specifically China (Lee et al, 2012). While this study has helped to contribute to these research areas, much more research is needed in order to understand leadership within international school environments (the complex nature of which has been described earlier) as well as in Chinese/Asian contexts.

I also stated earlier that the knowledge base used for informing policy, practice and leadership development globally has been informed largely by theory and empirical research from *western* cultural contexts without consideration of other cultural contexts (Dimmock & Walker, 2000a; Hallinger, 2010, 2011; Hallinger & Bryant, 2013; Walker & Dimmock, 2002). The emerged themes in this enquiry, and in particular Theme 3 – "The cultural and cognitive aspects of the

co-principalship”, highlight the need for more studies of leadership in non-western cultural contexts.

The results of this research have built upon previous co-principalship studies (Section 2.5) e.g. on decision-making (Masters, 2013), relationships (Wilhelmson & Döös, 2014) and on the only other dual-culture co-principalship study available at the time of this writing (see Bunnell, 2008). The paucity of research on co-principalships, coupled with the results from this enquiry and the apparent complexity of this particular form of a co-principalship, suggests that much more research into dual-culture co-principalships is needed. This need is emphasized when one considers the possibility that more international schools in China will consider using this leadership model, since the model appears to offer a variety of advantages and may serve to mitigate the challenging situations that international school leaders sometimes face (Brummitt & Keeling, 2013).

Suggested future dual-culture co-principalship research could focus on a number of areas that emerged from the review of literature and the five emerged themes. The impact of the *individual* principal on the leadership and management provided by the co-principalship, for example, was significant - a study of any one aspect of the individual principal in the context of the dual-culture co-principalship would further understanding of this leadership model: e.g. prior leadership and management experience (domestic and international), personality, AED stage, and intercultural competency.

The leadership and management provided by the co-principals was also significantly influenced by their relationship. Key research possibilities in this regard would be the impact of communication, trust, power dynamics and authority structures on the relationship and in turn on the co-principals’ combined leadership and management.

The aim of this enquiry was to analyze the leadership and management of dual-culture co-principals in international schools in China, and while this research has shed some light on these functions through an understanding of their sense-making and decision-making processes, they were explored only through the perspectives of the co-principals. As my unit of analysis consisted of the two dual-culture co-principals at each school, future research of this leadership model should include other individuals as well as groups (‘small cultures’) within the school community (i.e. students, teachers and parents). Whether through interviews, surveys or focus groups, gaining a ‘first hand’ understanding of the perspectives of these individuals and groups of the leadership and management provided by dual-culture co-principals as well as of *their* perspectives of their interactions with the co-principals will help to build upon (confirm, revise) the findings from this enquiry. Research that attempts to understand the extent to which these

potentially differing views conditions the interactions of the co-principals and others in the school community would also be useful.

The dual-culture co-principalship is not well-known globally – yet, it would also be important to learn how ‘accepted’ this leadership model is in the school communities of the co-principals, as ‘acceptance’ plays a role in legitimization processes. Finally, a comparative study of dual-culture co-principalships, of those leading and managing ‘Type A’ international schools and those leading and managing ‘Type C’ international schools may help to further an understanding of how authority structures, culture, and the type of international school impact dual-culture co-principalships and their ability to secure legitimacy for their school.

6.6 Final thoughts

Throughout the interview processes, I observed that each and every dual-culture co-principalship was distinct, despite there being an identical job description for some co-principals at *some* of the schools visited - the contexts, the number of years working together, the gender and ages of the co-principals, their background, prior experience, and personalities, and more...all combined to produce a special co-principalship. During the interview stage, I observed co-principal pairs that seemed to enjoy a close, collaborative, and trusting relationship that appeared to permeate its cohesiveness throughout the school community (despite the ever-present challenges as described in this enquiry).

On the other hand, I observed a co-principalship where each co-principal eventually led and managed two different divisions on their campus and had very little to do with each other; effectively, there appeared to be two ‘legitimate’ institutions on one campus. I could not imagine having to go to work every day knowing that I would need to lead and manage a school with a partner I could not work with nor enjoy working with, particularly given the daily stresses of leading and managing an international school in a China context. This said, and as a result of this enquiry, I am highly motivated (as I had mentioned earlier) to inform schools using the dual-culture co-principal leadership model with the findings from this research, in an attempt to improve the working life and effectiveness of dual-culture co-principals, and to increase the legitimacy of both international schools using this leadership model and of the leadership model itself.

In Section 1.2 (“Rationale for this enquiry”), I asked the question, “Why should anyone care about whether or not an international school is ‘legitimate’?” Examined against an institutional theory framework and considering the complex nature of their international school contexts in China, dual-culture co-principals face many challenges in securing legitimacy for their schools.

Having said this, I am nevertheless doubtful that parents would be interested in using the same legitimizing criteria as I have used in this enquiry. As the statistics that I shared in Section 1.2 indicate, the legitimizing criteria for many parents in China would seem to be the ability of a school to offer their children with certain advantages as well as placements into top universities overseas.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 - Sample letter sent to schools seeking permission to conduct research

A sample of the letter sent to the governing board at each of the two international school organizations participating in this research enquiry...

<p>_____, 2017</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>RE: Permission to Conduct Research</p> <p>Dear _____:</p> <p>I am in the final stage of my Doctor of Education (EdD) programme at the University of Bath, the research enquiry and thesis stage, and I am writing to request permission to conduct research at several YCIS campuses. My thesis is entitled, “Dual-culture co-principalships and the legitimacy of international schools in China”. This research aims to understand the sense-making and interpretive processes of dual-culture co-principals, processes that link to institution theory and the legitimacy of institutions.</p> <p>I am hoping that you will allow me to interview co-principals at several (or more?) [school name] campuses. The interviews should take approximately one to one-and-a-half hours for each co-principal pair. If approval is granted, I would like to seek your permission to allow me to contact the co-principals at the campuses in order to assess their willingness to participate in this research, and to set up dates and times for the interviews that are convenient for them.</p> <p>Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. I would be happy to answer any questions or concerns that you may have - you may contact me at my email address: [email address]. If you have any comments or questions about this research you may also contact the supervisor for my research enquiry, [name and email address of supervisor].</p> <p>This research has been approved by the University of Bath Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns or complaints about this research, you may contact [name and email of director of studies].</p> <p>If you agree to approving the research for my thesis project, it would be much appreciated if you could sign below and arrange for one of your staff to return the signed form in the enclosed self-addressed envelope. Alternatively, a signed letter of permission on your institution’s letterhead acknowledging your consent and permission to conduct this research at your institution can be emailed to me.</p> <p>Many thanks in advance for your consideration in approving the research for this research enquiry project.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p> <p>Adam Neufield</p>

Appendix 2 - Sample email sent to participants seeking willingness to be interviewed

A sample of the email sent to the dual-culture co-principals based at each of the ten international schools seeking their willingness to participate in this research enquiry...

Dear _____ and _____ :

I am in the final stage of my Doctor of Education (EdD) programme at the University of Bath - the research enquiry and thesis stage. The research I am conducting for this thesis aims to learn about the experiences of dual-culture co-principals and how they come together to make decisions on matters.

I am emailing you to determine if you would be willing to be interviewed together as part of this research. The interview process should take no longer than 1.5 hours. If you are willing to be interviewed, please feel free to suggest some dates and times that would be most convenient for you to be interviewed together - I will attempt to match your preferences.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Adam Neufield

P.S. I have attached for your reference a signed letter of permission to conduct this research from [governing board member/general principal].

cc: _____

Appendix 3 - Survey Monkey Survey Results

The table below summarizes the data collected from a follow-up survey sent to all participants. Two co-principals out of the twenty co-principals did not respond to the survey.

Name of campus	Chinese or foreign co-principal	Student enrolment at campus	Grade levels at campus	Approximate number of student nationalities	Approximate number of teacher nationalities	Number of years you have worked as a principal or head of school prior to first co-principalship	Number of years (in total) worked in a co-principal role	Number of years you have worked with current co-principal partner	Did you receive training prior to your co-principal role specifically devoted to co-principalships and/or dual-culture co-principalships?
School 1	Chinese	> 1500	K-G5	10	8	5	6	6	No
School 1	Chinese	501-750	K-G5	15	6	5	6	6	No
School 2	Foreign	251-500	G6-G12	1	5	35	3	3	No
School 2	Chinese	1001-1250	G6-G12	5	5	8	8	2	No
School 3	Foreign	751-1000	K-G5	15	15	11	2	2	No
School 3*	Chinese	751-1000	K-G5	40	30	0	4	2	Received some internal mentoring before commencing role; no formal training
School 4	Foreign	751-1000	K-G5	30	12	0	6	6	Received some internal mentoring before commencing role; no formal training
School 4	Chinese	501-750	K-G5	30	10	8	8	6	No
School 5	Chinese	100-250	G6-G12	> 20	9	3	3	3	No
School 5	Foreign	100-250	G6-G12	20	10	13	4	3	No
School 6*	Chinese	1251-1500	G6-G12	40	15	0	4	4	Received some internal mentoring before commencing role; no formal training
School 6	Foreign	1251-1500	G6-G12	40	15	?	?	4	?
School 7	Chinese	251-500	K-G12	25	9	0	9	2	No
School 7	Foreign	251-500	K-G12	25	9	?	9	2	?
School 8	Chinese	251-500	K-G12	28	14	10	10	7	No
School 8	Foreign	251-500	K-G12	30	11	0	7	7	Received some internal mentoring before commencing role; no formal training
School 9	Foreign	501-750	K-G12	30	15	7	4	4	No
School 9	Chinese	501-750	K-G12	30	10	10	10	10	No
School 10	Chinese	1001-1250	K-G12	7	20	4	3	2	No
School 10	Foreign	1001-1250	K-G12	7	20	0	2	2	No

* The Chinese co-principal at Schools 3 and 6 was the same individual. Foreign co-principals at Schools 6 and 8 did not respond to the survey.

Appendix 4 - Additional quotations from co-principals arranged by category

A selection of additional data quotes from some of the various thematic analysis categories are provided here for the reader's reference.

Existence of a business manager and co-principal decision-making team in some schools (J)

CP9C shared that it took some time and much effort for the two co-principals and business manager to learn how best to work with each other (i.e. schedules, protocols, communication) to make decisions on matters, adding, *"the difficulty is, you know, in, you know, some principal's experiences, [the] headmaster will look after all, but here you put, you know, one headmaster's duty on three people together. That's require lot [sic] of communication, collaboration and cooperation among these three."*

Chinese co-principal more often manages the challenges presented by Chinese and Asian parents (K)

Referring to Chinese parents, CP3C stated that she may *"understand more about the background and the cultural sensitiveness [sic] about the Chinese teachers thinking and why they [sic] doing that."* CP4F shared, *"I certainly know Chinese culture better than the average western person, but she [the Chinese co-principal] certainly knows it on a much deeper level than I do and obviously there's... because I'm not a fluent speaker of the language there's subtleties that I might miss sometimes"*, and CP7C offered her perception of why Chinese parents prefer to work with her: *"The foreign co-principal be seen [sic] by the Chinese parents is not that sincere as me, but if I only speak Chinese with these ... parents, they understand who I am, why I'm doing this, for their children they maybe more understand, I then feel, we are Chinese, you know."* Referring to meetings with Chinese and Asian parents during which his Chinese co-principal partner translated for him, CP7F stated that he would not know *"exactly what's being translated, and it [the statement/content] won't have the same tone [as what I used], even intensity, I'm sure, even though I don't know what it [the statement/content] is."* The same foreign co-principal shared that his Chinese co-principal partner would sometimes spend one to two hours in a meeting with Chinese parents after the two co-principals had already met the parents and resolved the particular issue. He added that *"he had no idea what she's talking about but I know it is probably doing a little bit more cultural backtracking, quite possibly."*

CP8C stated that *"...if you're much more familiar with the culture, sometimes you listen to them, you look at their body language or the word they choose, sometimes they just want to be polite*

but... that doesn't mean they don't have concern or questions. So I think I would be the one could be much more sensitive to pick those things up, yeah. And how can we comfort them, also I think yeah, if you know the culture better you can find the good point to make them feel much more comfortable.”

Referring to challenging meetings with parents, CP9F shared, *“And... you kind of, one of the strategies here in dealing with a difficult parent is simply the passage of time. In other words, you get going to meetings that go for two hours and... I... that would just never happen in [my home country]. You know, there'd be that point where you... you kind of have to draw it to a close, to a close because we're now going around in circles, we've kind of canvassed everybody's views and... tried to do that in a pleasant and understanding way, but there's nothing new to say so let's see if we can draw this to a conclusion. Here there is sometimes, not always but sometimes, it's just "No, part of what's going to make me feel good as a parent is the going over and over and over and around and around and even the passage of the two hours is evidence of your respect for my concern" and... I find that difficult.”*

The foreign co-principal learned along the way (P)

Describing the learning curve for a principal coming from a lone leadership role in their home (foreign) country into a dual-culture co-principal role in a China context, CP4F stated, *“... ‘cause you still need all the same skills that you needed there, but you need all these other added aspects of understanding culture, the ambiguity that we face, the language, not really knowing what people are saying necessarily...understanding all the nuances and all that type of thing.”*

Meanings and understandings (Q)

- *“Not all Chinese principals see international education in the same way.” (CP1F)*
- The co-principals had different perspectives on the capabilities of a new teacher. (CP2F)
- *“So, you can't jump to conclusions or judge people by what you see necessarily or by face value. You always have to go deeper and understand where they're coming from and I think that's where I've had to really step back and put myself in their shoes.” (CP2F)*
- *“...and also as it's a [sic] international schools, as usually [sic], the Chinese staff from local, not that have [sic] international experience. That's... why we have the Western or international co-principal in each campus.” (CP5C)*
- *“Directness in discussions aimed at shared understanding is important.” (CP6F)*

- Differences in “interpretations”, “appraisal system”, “payment” may cause “a kind of division between the international team and the Chinese teaching team.” (CP7C)
- “For emergency cases, common sense is what is used.” (CP5C)
- “It was a matter of making sure that we both were...able...to see the outcome in a mutually understanding way.” (CP6F)

Planning and preparing for decisions and communications is important (S)

CP4C described differences between Chinese and foreign teacher groups with respect to the need at times to relax one’s principles to achieve a certain goal: “...*(laughs)*, but I think for the long time, you know *(laughs)*, probably you know... temporarily you give up a little bit [sic] principle can save us a lot of energy *(laughing)*. Maybe that's worse to do. Yeah for the... international colleagues... sometimes they really can't understand and they thought this is the principle, we shouldn't give it up or... drop off things.”

Relying on each other (T)

CP2C shared, “when it's co-leadership, I think, if you get it right, it's more effective, it helps you to see the both sides”, and CP6F said, “we debrief in the morning, we debrief in the afternoon and we... really often are chatting at night about how things may... may impact conversations that are ongoing. So we spend a lot of time... sharing our thinking, and sometimes it's kind of nice to be able to do that.”

Referring to challenging meetings with parents, CP4F stated that “I just felt that it would be helpful for me to have her there, as a female, as a Chinese member of staff, as well, I felt that would be useful. So, the two of us did sit in on that meeting together and listened to this teacher and [I] kinda made notes”. CP7F shared that “I might lead the discussion initially and then she will chip in with something and I'll sit back. And it means that I have the opportunity to think about the discussion as it's going, give yourself some breathing space, hearing what she's picking up on, and she might take a different angle and I might think, ‘Gee, that's the angle we should be going.’” CP7F added that having a partner in meetings gives you “time to regather your thoughts and make sure that you cover all your items that you know that you needed to cover. And that's where it's a real advantage.”

CP7F stated that “I probably really do enjoy having someone to regularly bounce something on, like, every decision that we have to make, you've got someone else same level of leadership, same degree of confidentiality, you can bounce an idea on.”

Cultural assumptions and generalizations (X)

CP5C offered her understanding of why the dual-culture co-principalship leadership model was set up in their schools: *“[My organization] set up the co-principal model, from my understanding, as it's start [sic] a new business in a country, so they have to have someone know the local culture. That role should be the responsibility for the Chinese co-principal.”*

Impact of different groups on co-principals' sense-making and decision-making processes (ZF)

CP3C described the Chinese teacher group at her school by noting language and cultural differences related to how they express concerns: *“But I don't know, maybe they have their reason for doing that because in Chinese culture it's always about the collection. It's not like individual lives...like, we unite together to do one thing, to raise the possibility for success, something like that. And it's maybe it might be they feel more comfortable talking to each other in Chinese.”*